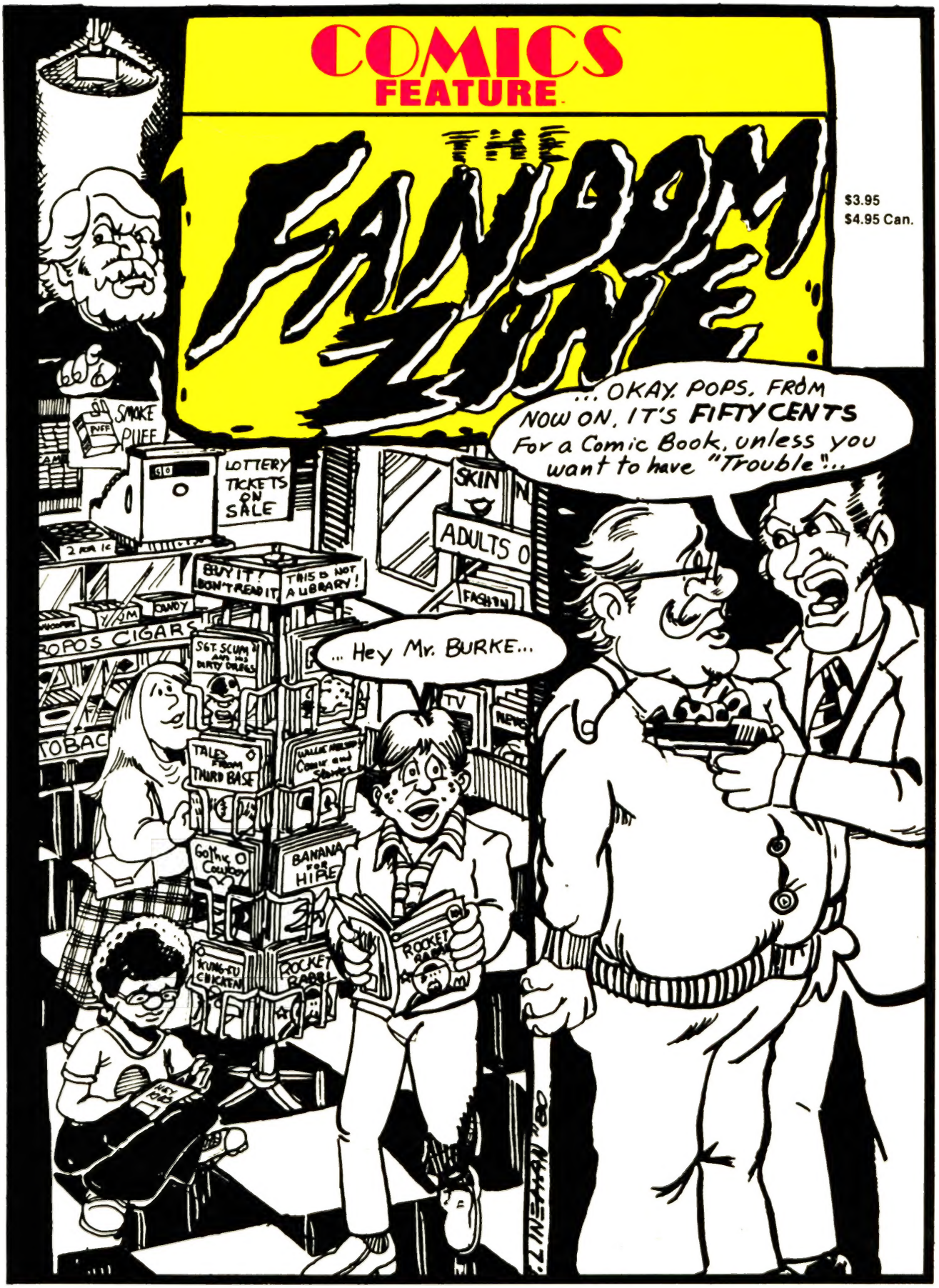
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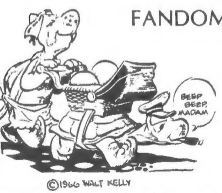


FANDOM ORIGINS PRESENTS:

"PALEOLITHIC FANDOM"

by Don and Maggie Thompson

This is the first in a multi-part history of comics fandom. We don't know how long the history will be or how much information will finally be crammed into it. It is, of necessity, the view of only two of the people who happened to be around for a big chunk of it; other comics fans will have had different experiences over the decades involved. If you have vital items of information on areas we seem to have slipped over, please let us know and we'll incorporate them into later reports. Don't be concerned if we have barrelled by the time in question; we can always go back to pick up a loose thread or insert a new color in the design. We'd also like to run photos of the Old Days and covers of old fanzines. The prints and copies of covers can be returned, if you'll include your name and address. Try to provide as much information as possible about what you send. Send letters of information, photos, and the like to us: Don and Maggie Thompson, FANDOM COMICS, 8786 Hendricks Road, Mentor, Ohio 44060.

In the Paleolithic Age, mankind began to use the earliest chipped stone tools. It knew about fire. It lived in caves and rock shelters. It made tools. If it were not for the existence of Paleolithic Man, we wouldn't have digital watches today.

Comics fandom had its own Paleolithic Age.

The Paleolithic world of comics fandom had no more than a few, scattered, short-lived focal points. It had no common fund of information, no organization, no frequent gatherings, no widely circulated fan magazines. Indeed, it had little knowledge of itself.

In part, this was because the world at large had little knowledge of comics. Comics were a disposable medium, whether in newspapers or in comic-book form.

It's really vital to understand this, and it seems hard for some people to time-bind to that extent. Comics were really, sincerely sneered at. Those who read them, read them once or twice and then threw them away. Parents felt they were doing their part to improve their childrens' minds by forbidding comic books in the house. Day-old newspapers were used to wrap the garbage, and comic strips were considered an unimportant part of newspapers.

Newspaper strips were light amusements to be tolerated, maybe even joked over. Even people who followed one strip or another with regularity didn't ***save*** any of them, except for the occasionally apt strip, which would be taped to a refrigerator or put on a co-worker's desk.

Paper drives and patriotism combined to remove the bulk of strips and comics from the world in a gigantic purge which had its follow-up about a decade later, when community bonfires were fed by comic books in a massive effort to clean children's minds by removing such pollution.

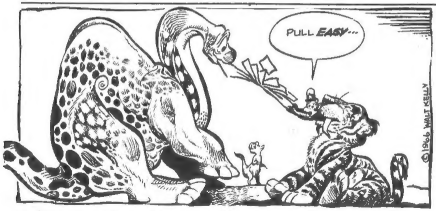
And where were the comics fans during all this?

First we should make it clear that we're discussing an evolving world.

In the earliest days of comics collecting, what fans there were were strip collectors, because that's what was available. It wasn't always easy; ***THIMBLE THEATRE***, for example, couldn't have been collected in complete form at the time of Popeye's introduction, because the strip appeared on an irregular basis in every paper that ran it. (Only in the Hyperion Press edition, edited by Bill Blackbeard, have nearly all those strips been available from one source.)

There were people who admired particular cartoonists or strips. There were very occasional books of strip on cartoon reprints. The poet e.e. cummings wrote a paean of praise to the small-circulation strip ***KRAZY KAT***, and his article appeared in a ***KRAZY KAT*** hardcover collection. A few essayists singled out their favorites. There was even enough interest to warrant an infrequent hardcover book on the topic. ***COMICS AND THEIR CREATORS*** (by Martin Sheridan) came out in 1942, selecting a group of cartoonists, giving their biographies and a brief sample of their work. In 1947, Coulton Waugh discussed American strips to that point in ***THE COMICS***. Stephen Becker's 1959 ***COMIC ART IN AMERICA*** was an attempt to discuss comic art to that point in a big books with ***lots*** of samples. As you can see, such books were few and far between.

But, despite comic books having become well established (in fact, past the point of their highest circulation) by the time of Becker's book, he de-



voted more space to ***sports*** cartoons in ***COMIC ART IN AMERICA*** than he did to comic books. Comic books had been introduced in the 1930's and had become steadily more popular through World War II. They provided cheap, fast reading that could entertain a kid after school or a soldier on a ten-minute break; stories could be consumed swiftly and dropped hurriedly, if necessary. Comics could be concealed in school workbooks and, if they were confiscated, their loss did not mean financial disaster. Comics of all kinds were enormously popular and could be doled out to kids as rewards for good behavior, as timekillers on long trips, and as cheap gifts for special occasions. They were unimportant but fun and could be traded or hoarded, depending on the mood of the moment.

But no one took them particularly seriously. By the end of World War II, science-fiction fandom was a firmly established group of admirers of a type of creative fiction. There were dozens of amateur magazines devoted to science fiction and the people who read it, and there were many clubs with regular meetings. There were even annual world science-fiction conventions. But no one thought of holding such an event for readers of comics.

Comics fans collected comic books and strips almost clandestinely. Ted White once was the topic of a newspaper article which brought him intense public attention—and embarrassment—as the collector of thousands of comics. The paper dubbed him "The boy with 10,000 comics," although he had far more comics than that. Most collectors avoided that sort of attention and went so far as to hide their hobby from their friends. There were a few dealers, most of whom carried comics as sideline—a few forlorn boxes in the back of the garage were assigned to hold the accumulation garnered when more "collectible" magazines passed through their hands. Second-hand shops sometimes got in old comics and threw them in a bin, where careful rummaging could sometimes produce items of rare age and fragility—at two for a dime.

But (and this is, perhaps, most difficult to convey) almost no one knew ***anything*** about the field as a whole, not to mention knowing anything about fellow collectors. If you collected, say, Harvey's strip reprints of ***STEVE CANYON***, you had ***STEVE CANYON #7*** forever on your wantlist. Why? Because there was an ***ad*** for #7 in #6, complete with a picture of the cover of #7. Heck, you ***knew*** it was real, because you'd seen it displayed in that ad. But it was never published, and you had no way of knowing it didn't exist unless you'd had a subscription to the Harvey strip reprints (in which case, to the injury of the death of a favorite comic was added the insult of having your subscription filled out with dismal issues of ***SAD SACK***).

There was ***no*** list anywhere of the Dell special number series. We know, because we wrote to Western (home of the editorial offices) and asked. No such list existed, we were assured. So we began to compile one. It took years to finish, and that was ***after*** comics fandom had been born to help us with the struggle. But we're getting ahead of the story.

Do you have the picture? There was a fandom, but it was devoted to science fiction; if you collected comics, you were a weirdo. (Actually, that's still true, but now we weirdos have the clout of commercialism, which legitimizes us in many people's eyes.) Some few weirdos in science-fiction fandom would occasionally parade their strangeness in front of their fellows. Now and then, an article would appear in a fanzine of the time in praise of a certain comic book or strip.

SF fandom had its favorites. ***POGO***, by the gifted and extraordinary Walt Kelly, was discovered by some SF fans as a special delight even before it began as a newspaper strip in the New York ***STAR*** in 1948. When Kelly's work became more politically oriented, it attracted even more SF fans (and Kelly knew quite a bit about the SF field himself). Two Big Name Fans (Walt Willis and Bob Shaw) did a parody of ***POGO*** in ***FEN CRITTUR COMICAL BOOKS***, for example; and ***THE BULLETIN OF THE CLEVELAND SCIENCE FICTION SOCIETY*** #13 (March 30, 1952, edited by Harlan Ellison) carried an article ***"ON STF COMIX AND SUCH"*** by Ralph Reese (or Beese; because of a flaw in mimeography, it's hard to say). (That article began by bewailing the fact that people tended to judge science fiction by the lousy SF in comics of the day, but concluded that readers should take a look at EC's lineup. "Their art is top-notch stuff. Really fine work by artists who you can tell are not hacks but take pride in their work. Leading the artists of these magazines is a fellow named ***WALLY WOOD*** who should certainly be looked up by the promags." Eventually, he was. Wood did quite a bit of SF art for such magazines as ***GALAXY*** after the death of EC.)

It was the EC readers who first formed their own comics fandom. Such fanzines as ***POTRZEBIE*** and ***HOOHAH*** (both EC jargon) came out with background articles on the line and its doings—and provided a forum for admirers of a line of comics. The desire to provide communication links led to a

list of readers Ron Parker ran in ***HOOHAH*** #9 (October 1957). It included John Benson, E. Nelson Bridwell, Bill Gaines, Archie Goodwin, Larry Ivie, Bill Meyers, Marty Pahls, Larry Stark, Bob Stewart, Fred von Bernewitz, and Ted White. There was a grand total of 44 plus the editor, not exactly a world-shaking size for a fandom. However, it included quite a few who are notable for their fannish longevity.

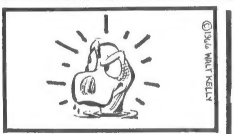
(EC had, itself, encouraged interest in forming a fandom, with its fan-addict club, complete with newsletter. But the Comics Code killed the comic-book EC's, and the club went with them.)

There were other fanzines in those early days, none of them lasting very long (or, at least, none of them producing many issues). You'll find a list in Bob Overstreet's current ***THE COMIC PRICE GUIDE***, Bob Stewart's ***EC FAN BULLETIN***, Jimmy Taurasi's ***FANTASY COMICS*** (one zine that was not EC-centered; it was fantasy-comics-centered), Mike May's ***EC FAN JOURNAL***, and George Jennings' ***EC WORLD PRESS***.

When EC went under as a comic-book publisher, the fans found their interests diverted to other channels, though some continued to collect comics. The world of comics collecting reverted to pretty much what it had been, single fans in separate communities who picked up wanted items when and where they could.

We met on June 8, 1957, at a science-fictional picnic at the home of SF writer and fan Basil Wells. (Also there were such people as Andre Norton, P. Schuyler Miller, Ed Hamilton, and Leigh Brackett.) We hit it off at once and spent the day talking SF. But we found also a common bond in comics and talked about such topics as ***L'IL ABNER***, ***POGO***, and EC. (Our first contact by mail came that fall when Don sent Maggie a copy of the first issue of ***HUMBUG***, Harvey Kurtzman's first magazine after the ill-fated ***TRUMP***.) But our luck in finding each other was not typical of comics fans as a group.

Virtually anyone could pose as an



"expert" on comics, because few people could challenge the accuracy of a statement. (Comics companies almost never credited their artists and writers. Nor was there much information on comic strips. Don was actually present at one SF con party where one fan talked for a long time about his "inside information" on the industry. He told, for example, of the sad case of Leona Starr, a woman who couldn't sell her strip under a woman's name. The poor lady had to adopt the pseudonym of "Leonard Starr" in order to sell ***ON STAGE***. Well, who besides Leonard Starr and his friends could have contradicted this windy con artist? Who knew whether an "expert" was making things up as he went along? There was just no source of reliable facts on the field for the general public.)

Then came Labor Day Weekend 1960. The World Science-Fiction Convention was held in Pittsburgh that weekend, and we attended. (Maggie stayed with her parents in their rooms; Don was in a single; it was two years before we were married.)

It was a lovely convention. Randy Garrett and Isaac Asimov and Robert Heinlein and Judy Merril and James Blish and a vast crunch of other people attended a party in Maggie's parents' rooms. Maggie's family plus Don won "Best Group" at the costume Ball.

But there was another "group" that got a lot of attention at that ball. Not many people knew who they were, but a fan couple from New York got admiring glances. They were Dick and Pat Lupoff, and they were dressed as Captain and Mary Marvel.

And if you don't know why ***that*** is important in the history of comics fandom, join us next month for ***"IT WAS COMICS TIME."***

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1980's BEEN A GOOD YEAR for ***COMICS FEATURE!*** Our fresh, positive attitude has been a ***hit*** with ***comics fandom*** and ***professionals*** alike. We're the ***smash hit*** of the ***year!!***

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COMICS FEATURE #9

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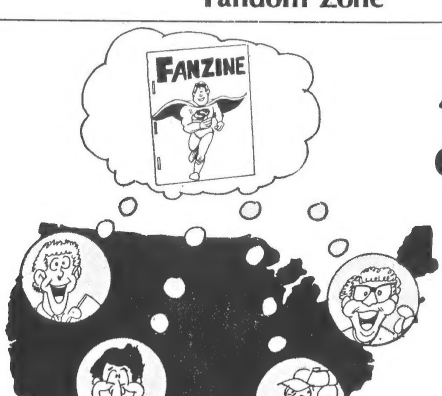
Fandom Zone



"IT WAS COMICS TIME!"

By Don & Maggie Thompson

[Note: This column is, of necessity, a personal view of the development of comics fandom. Others who lived through the same events will have a different view. We would love to hear from them, so as to show the different effects the same time had on different people. Don't be concerned if we have gone by the time you wish to discuss; we can always introduce new material. Send letters of information, photos of long-ago events, and the like to us: Don and Maggie Thompson, 8786 Hendricks Road, Mentor, Ohio 44060.]

It was the end of a decade. (Remember, decades run from 1 to 10; there was no year 0. The decade of the fifties ran from 1951 to 1960.)

It was Labor Day weekend 1960.

Sit-ins had begun in the South, with blacks campaigning for the right to be served at lunch counters; the first integration of San Antonio, Texas, lunch counters had occurred in March.

The U-2 reconnaisance plane piloted by Gary Powers had been shot down over the U.S.S.R. just before an Eisenhower-Khrushchev summit meeting was going to begin in May. (The summit conference was similarly shot down, when Eisenhower refused to apologize for the flight.)

Also in May, birth control pills were made publicly available for the first time.

Most Americans were unaware that the National Liberation Front (a communist group opposing Ngo Dinh Diem) was forming in South Vietnam.

As the fans assembled for Pittcon (the world science fiction convention in Pittsburgh), Presidential candidates John Kennedy and Richard Nixon were preparing for their first TV debate, to come later that month.

It was the time of a real watershed of experience in the U.S. Life in the 1960s would be radically different from life to that point.

The fifties had been mostly the Eisenhower years—years of brinkmanship, rock and roll, juvenile delinquency, and Cold War. It was ***not*** the high-spirited, carefree time of ***HAPPY DAYS***. It was a time when children in school regularly participated in Civil Defense drills so they'd know what to do in case of nuclear attack—a time of constant, just-below-the-surface fears of A-bomb holocaust. And the decade was coming to an end.

In September 1960, it had been almost six years since the Comics Code had been instituted, four and a half since the failure of EC's last attempt to produce dramatic magazines to avoid the Code. It had been almost seven years since Captain Marvel had agreed to retire from the skies in a bargain between Fawcett and DC which kept the Big Red Cheese grounded.

Fandom Zone

Pittcon was grand fun for the hundreds of science-fiction fans who attended. Worldcons had gradually been growing in size, but con committees had not yet reached the point at which they were trying to discourage people from coming. Attendees included Judith Merril, James Blish, Robert Heinlein, Issac Asimov, Harlan Ellison, and Randy Garrett.

And Dick and Pat Lupoff.

Few people knew Dick and Pat. They had been reading SF for years and were involved with other New York City fans. But they hadn't done a lot of fan writing and were not widely known.

It was at Pittcon that they did two things: They attended the costume ball dressed as Captain and Mary Marvel. And they distributed their new fanzine, ***XERO***. Many people commented with pleasure on their excellent costumes; not so many were eager to take the 38-page ***XERO***.

It seemed on the surface to be just one of countless fanzines that came and went in that era. It was mimeographed and contained the usual gamut of fannish articles, including one by Harlan Ellison on ***PSYCHO***. But the one that is most recommended—and is of central importance to this article—was titled "The Big Red Cheese" and was written by Dick. It was an affectionate look at Captain Marvel and it was announced as the first of a series. The series was to be called ***And All in Color for a Dime.***

In their editorial, the Lupoffs gave their prospectus:

"***And All in Color for a Dime***" can use as many more segments as people care to contribute. The first installment, back on page 17, was to have had another section on the symbolism present in Captain Marvel. All right, stop sneering and go on to the next item if that's how you feel. Seriously, stop and think a minute: the innocent boy following that dark figure into an ***abandoned subway***... the ceremony changing the frightened but virtuous boy into a strong and courageous man by supernatural means... the brilliant white-coated scientist scheming to become ruler of the universe, blocked but never destroyed by the mighty figure... Who was the ***real*** hero, who the ***real*** villain of the Captain Marvel stories?

"This and other matters will be discussed in an article in the ***AICFAD*** series, dealing with comic book villains. Walter Breen has announced his intention to write it, and it should be ready one of these months.

"Lee Ann Tremper has agreed to try her hand at an installment about her girlhood heroine, Wonder Woman. And a little thought about ***that*** series reveals more than a simple adventure story, too.

"Who else wants to try his hand? Feel like rushing to the defense of Superman, anyone? How about the old aviation strips: Captain Midnight, Barney Baxter, oh hell, there must have been at least a dozen—if not a hundred. And super characters and semi-super characters by the carload. Anybody want to do an article on the common characteristics of supermen?"

None of the suggested future topics ran in the pages of ***XERO***, as it happened. (However, Juanita Coulson eventually was assigned the Wonder Woman article, and Lupoff himself tackled the aviation strips. Those articles appeared, not in ***XERO*** but in ***THE COMIC-BOOK BOOK***, edited by Don Thompson and Dick Lupoff, from Arlington House in 1973.) But the twelve pages devoted to Captain Marvel brought a response from an audience that hadn't known of its own existence.

So ***XERO*** was the inspiration for comics fandom?

Not quite.

Because something else happened Pittcon. It was not begun by ***XERO***, because we didn't see ***XERO #1*** until after the convention. It was at the Worldcon banquet that we had a long conversation with another SF fan. His name was Hal Lynch, and we spent a pleasant meal discussing how much we all enjoyed certain comic books and strips—and about how little informa-

Fandom Zone

tion there was about them.

This was an age in which few comics artists' or writers' names were public knowledge. (We wrote last month about the lack of information in the field at that point.) We all agreed that there were many fans who followed favorite strips and would enjoy a fanzine devoted to comic art. Don Thompson and Maggie Curtis decided to start such a fanzine.

That fall Maggie began her first year at Oberlin College, and Don started working at the Cleveland ***Press***, visiting her on weekends in Oberlin. There, using the college's mimeograph machine, they produced a flyer, ***HARBINGER #1***, that fall.

"***HARBINGER*** is more than just a one-shot, it is a sighting shot, published in hopes of reaching as many potential supporters of and contributors to ***COMIC ART*** as possible.

"***COMIC ART*** is a projected fanzine devoted to, as the title suggests, comic art. Not only comic strips and comic books, but cartoons (political, gag or sports); Big/Better Little Books; hardcover or paperbound collections whether of strips or cartoons; animated movie and TV cartoons, etc.

"Content will be of several types, designed to appeal to the casual peruser, the avid fan, the collector, or the reminiscer who grows nostalgic at mention of bygone books, strips, episodes or characters."

We had heard of ***XERO*** by the time ***HARBINGER*** appeared, for we recommended it to our mailing list. And we dedicated ***HARBINGER #1*** (and, therefore, the concept of doing a comics-only fanzine) to the people who had given us the most support: "Dedicated to: Dick & Pat Lupoff, Hal Lynch, Bill Thailing & Larry Ivie, for services rendered."

So ***HARBINGER*** was the inspiration for comics fandom?

Not quite.

Because, totally unknown to us, two ***other*** fans—not science-fiction fans at all—were talking about starting an amateur magazine devoted to comic-book super-heroes. They were Jerry Bails and Roy Thomas, and they didn't know about the Lupoffs and they didn't know about us. They just wanted to start a magazine about their interest in comics.

Roy Thomas is written about from time to time; Jerry Bails is less well known these days. When we asked for some personal information in 1976, he said he was born in Kansas City, Missouri, on June 26, 1933. "In 1934 they stuck a 10¢ sticker on me and put me up for sale. Wore a Superman sweatshirt at 7, dyed it blue, along with a sugar sack. Stole my sis' blue petticoat and with a pair of scissors made myself a Batman costume for Halloween." He sent samples of his art to EC ("and Al Feldstein was nice enough to respond with advice.") He once won two tickets to the Orpheum Theatre for an entry in the Kansas City ***Journal***'s weekly cartoon contest, but the ***Journal*** went bankrupt three days later and Jerry never got the tickets.

No doubt realizing the uncertainty of a future in cartooning, Jerry opted for a B.S. in physics, an M.S. in math, and a Ph.D. in natural science. But, even as he became a teacher, he obviously never lost his love for comics. And with Roy Thomas (another man who loved comics while getting into teaching as a profession) he began to prepare the first issue of ***ALTER EGO*** (or ***ALTER-EGO***; the hyphen came and went throughout the magazine's existence).

So ***ALTER EGO*** was the inspirat for comics fandom?

Not quite.

In those days, Julius Schwart comics at DC were running addres of some fans in the lettercolum Where addresses are available, c tact is possible.

Was DC's running the inspiration comics fandom?

No. None of these was the s source for comics fandom, beca comics fandom grew from them all.

Comics fandom ***could*** have star from any one of these sources. It co have started ***without*** any specific of these sources. ***XERO #1***, ***CO ART #1***, ***ALTER EGO #1***, DC's Sil Age comics—all combined to prod what comics fandom became. T started independently. ***COMIC A*** was not born because of ***XERO***. ***AL EGO*** formed without ***HARBINGER***.

Because it was, quite simply, cc ics time.

There were, all at once, a la number of people who had grown with comics, who had learned to re from four-color pages, who had h comics as a vital and beloved part their childhoods.

These comics-loving kids had co to an articulate age and wanted to t about their love.

And so they did.

Next month: "What Next?" •

FANDOM ORIGINS PRESENTS:

WHAT NEXT?

by Don and Maggie Thompson

[Note: We are only two of the fans who were active from the earliest days of what is currently comics fandom. There were many big names in those early days—and many little-known people who, nonetheless, devotedly collected comics in the early 1960s. In the interests of presenting as wide-screen a picture as possible of those days, we'd like to invite Fans Who Were There to provide more of the vista. Send letters of information, photos of long-ago events, and the like to us: ***Don and Maggie Thompson, 8786 Hendricks Road, Mentor Ohio 44060.***]

Twenty years ago, comics fandom was forming. No matter how many times we indicate the small focus of its beginnings, today's readers may find the fact hard to believe. We don't know initial circulations of ***XERO*** and ***ALTER EGO*** (two of the first three centers of discussion for comics fandom); however, we once traced the printing history of ***COMIC ART,*** our own comics fanzine. The history was compiled in September 1965, and the researches were as accurate as we could make them at the time.

HARBINGER was the single sheet we used to announce the upcoming publication of ***COMIC ART;*** we had run off 50 copies and mailed them in January 1961. (This may be the place to point out that we always appreciate getting corrections of our errors. It was not until we found this that we recalled that ***HARBINGER*** was mailed in 1961, not in the fall of 1960. Memories were vague, since we had begun planning ***CA*** during Labor Day Weekend 1960.)

Obviously, response to the flyer was overwhelming. Fans rollied to the cause of a fanzine devoted to comics art, as you can tell from the circulation of our first issue in April 1961. We had a print run of 75.

A discussion of that issue may give you a picture of how comics fandom was set up in those days. First of all, ***COMIC ART*** #1 (like ***XERO*** #1) was mimeographed. (***ALTER EGO*** #1 was run off on a spirit duplicator.) ***CA*** #1 was almost as much of a sighting shot as ***HARBINGER*** had been. ***CA*** was published "on a very irregular schedule," and #1 was free. (#2 would be 20¢ or free for contributions, trades, and the like.) There was only one formal "article," a discussion by Dick Lupoff of the starting of comics fandom as he saw it.

The big feature of interest to many of those 70 readers (we kept five file copies) was the first fan-press printing of the full text of the Code of the Comics Magazine Association of America, Inc. It's the sort of thing that is considered almost routine today, but it was quite an eye-opener then, somthing few fans had seen. (Especially of interest was "General Standards Part C: All elements or techniques not specifically mentioned herein, but which are contrary to the spirit and intent of the Code, are considered violations of good taste or decency, shall be prohibited.")

Of more interest to today's readers may be Dick Lupoff's article, ***"Re-Birth."*** He commented on what was, he felt a burgeoning interest in comics. By this point, ***XERO*** #2 had been published—with ***"The Spawn of M. C. Gaines"*** by Ted White. It was an 11-page piece devoted to DC, which ended with a commentary on what had happened in the most recent years. ***FLASH, GREEN LANTERN,*** and the ***JLA*** had been revived. ***Hawkman*** was scheduled for revival. Ted's last paragraph read:

"Beyond that? 'The Green Arrow', once the star of ***MORE FUN*** but for years since a subsidiary, is scheduled to try out in ***SHOWCASE.*** I think he'll make it. I think kids are ready for him and his fellows. I think they'll be happy with a new era of super-heroes like the one twenty years ago. I know that their grown-up and nostalgic brothers will be happy. And maybe it'll make the despondent publishers happy too. Maybe this [will be] the shot in the arm that will save the comics industry. And as an old ***ALL-STAR COMICS*** fan, I'll crow and say 'I told you so!'"

Dick, commenting on what he had experienced as a result of publishing his own article on Captain Marvel and Ted's article on DC, wrote:

" *'ALL IN COLOR'* has been the most letter-provoking feature of ***XERO;*** numerous people have requested copies, specifying that their motive is to obtain the comics articles, and if all the authors currently committed to write for the series come through with articles, the series will run well into 1962 before material runs out—at the present rate of publication...All of this means something, and unless I'm one very lousy inducer, it means that there is a great amount of interest in comic books, that it has been rolling along, usually unpublicized, showing through only occasionally in science fiction fandom and other peripheral areas of activity."

We managed to get out another issue of ***COMIC ART*** in 1961. This time, our print run was 125 copies, and it was August.

By this time, four issues of ***XERO*** and two issues of ***ALTER EGO*** had been published. This time, we had two articles (one by Dick Lupoff on costumed heroes without super-powers and super-powered heroes without costumes; one by Buck Coulson generally making fun of the whole idea of comics fandom, wondering why there wasn't a similar fondness for ***"Dick and Jane"*** primers, since "they are on the same literary level."). But our letter column had started to show what marvelous people had things to say about comics and the idea of a comics fandom.

Crockett Johnson (creator of ***BARNABY*** and ***HAROLD AND THE PURPLE CRAYON***) said, "I gag a bit at the word 'fanzine' and question its intelligibility and value." Carl Barks said, "I remember [Walt Kelly] as a thin kid whose running chatter on any subject was like a drumfire of Pogoisms." Steve Stiles commented that ***CRIME AND PUNISHMENT*** wouldn't survive the Comics Code. Harvey Kurtzman

Fandom Zone

said he was getting some ***SPIRIT***s "to run in the upcoming ***HELP!***." Jerry De Fuccio wrote, "Incidentally, I have the very first drawing of Superman by Siegel and Shuster as conceived in their Cleveland High School days. They titled it 'The Superman' in 1925. I also have a very rough layout the boys conceived in 1936 when they were trying to peddle the idea. It bears a few rough pencil sketches of the character and bills him as the 'greatest adventure/humor strip of the Age.' But get this: in the background they display the marketing value of this character. They show him on cornflakes boxes and T-shirts!"

You get the idea.

There was an outpouring of comments and enthusiasm and readiness to give personal views and anecdotes to enrich the experiences of those few other devoteed to an artform in danger.

In fact, by the end of 1961, there were enough fans that those seminal fans, Jerry Bails and Roy Thomas, founded a group called The Academy of Comic-Book Arts and Sciences. Roy Thomas established the Alley Awards and tallied the ballots.

What on earth were the Alley Awards? Well, since he was a comic-strip caveman, it could be argued that Alley Oop was the first super-hero. Get it? The first Alley Awards (for 1961) were given to favorites in the comic-book field. Nominating ballots were sent to twenty people, who thus became the first Board of Directors of The Academy. They were: Jerry Bails, Bob Barron, Len Brown, Dale Christman, Wendell Davis, Richard Durrell, Donald Foote, Ronn Foss, Irving Glassman, Ron Haydock, Howard Keltner, Ed Lahmann, Dick Lupoff, Douglas Marden, Raymond Miller, Fred Norwood, Frank Nuessel, Roy Thomas, Don Thompson, and Bill White.

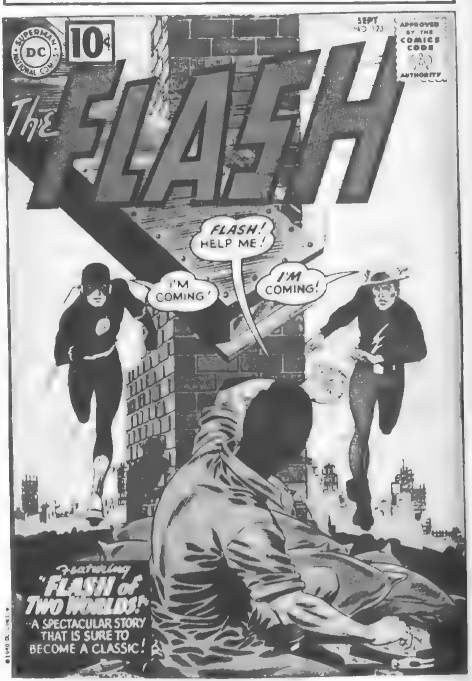
(You may note that there are no women listed, despite Pat Lupoff's and Maggie Curtis [later Maggie Thompson]'s activities in the field. Though there were other women who read and collected comics, they were not very much in evidence in comics fandom then. In fact, Paul Krassner asked Maggie about that at John Benson's NYC comicon—but we're getting ahead of ourselves.)

The Board of Directors nominated favorites in listed categories, and the final ballot was sent to more than 750 active fans. Roy told us that fewer than 200 ballots were returned. The results were printed in ***ALTER EGO #4*** (Fall 1962) and provide an interesting view of comic book favorites of the earliest organized comics fandom:

FLASH #123 was the big winner in the first Alley Awards

1. Best Regularly Published Comic Book: ***JUSTICE LEAGUE***
2. Best Adventure Hero/ine Having Own Comic Book: ***Green Lantern***
3. Best Adventure Hero/ine Not Having Own Comic Book: ***Hawkman***
4. Best Supporting Character: ***Elongated Man***
5. Best Cover: ***FLASH #123 ("Flash of Two Worlds")***
6. Best Single Issue of a Comic Book: ***FLASH #123 ("Flash of Two Worlds")***
7. Best Artist: ***Carmine Infantino***
8. Best Story: ***"Flash of Two Worlds"***
9. Best Adventure-Hero Group: ***The Justice League of America***
10. Hero/ine Most Worthy of Revival: ***The Spectre***

Special Division: Worst Comic-Book Currently Published: ***WONDER WOMAN***



Fandom Zone

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appears only on comic magazines which have been carefully reviewed, prior to publication, by the Comics Code Authority – an agency operating apart from any individual publisher, exercising independent judgment – and found to have met the high standards of morality required by the code of the Comics Magazine Association of America, Inc.

You'll recall that, then the Alleys were first voted on, only one Marvel Comic of the so-called Silver Age had been published. It was ***FANTASTIC FOUR #1***.

It may seem hard to credit, when you look at Overstreet's tenth ***COMIC BOOK PRICE GUIDE*** and see ***FANTASTIC FOUR #1*** listed at $1,000 in mint condition. But we must assure you that, when it came out, that issue was not any great shakes. We panned it (along with ***THE ATOM***) in ***COMIC ART #2***; people who ignored us and bought it and packed it carefully away then are doubtless gloating now. (Actually, we did suggest to a dealer friend at the time that ***FF #1*** was going to be worth something someday. His response was, "Naw, none o' this new stuff will ever be worth anything." We are charitable souls; we remind him of this only rarely.) At any rate, the artistic quality of ***FF #1*** may explain its absence from the roster of fan favorites in that first Alley Poll.

You may notice something else about this voting. Your first clue would have been the name of the awards, and your second clue could have been the fans behind the Academy. The majority of the comics fans was not the SF fans who were also interested in comics art. It was not the critics of political cartoons, animated cartoons, strips, funny animals, satire, and the like. It was, by and large, fans of comic-book super-heroes. Or, as Jerry Bails once said to us, "If the character has a mask and a cape, then I'm interested."

Carl Barks' work wasn't recognized throughout comics fandom then, although it was still being published. Comic strips were ignored by virtue of the very title of the Academy. Nor was this some sort of strange skewing done strictly by those setting up the Alley Awards. It was the thrust of comics fandom in its infancy; it was comic-book super-hero fandom. ●

NEXT MONTH:
THE MARVEL AGE OF COMICS

NEXT ISSUE

An Interview with the ***UPSTART STUDIO:***

Howard Chaykin, Walt Simonson, Frank Miller, and James Sherman

Our special "birthday" salute to ***CAPTAIN AMERICA***

Including the inside story of his origin: A talk with ***Joe Simon***

Plus: A *COMICS FEATURE* exclusive: Unpublished ***CAPTAIN AMERICA*** Artwork

by JOHN BYRNE

The Super-Team Spirit
THE MARVEL FAMILY and the FAWCETT HEROES

The Lost Comics Companies investigates
CRASH COMICS

Plus The Fandom Zone, Headlines, End Notes, and more.

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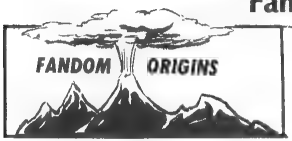
On sale in late February



THE MARVEL AGE OF COMICS

by Don and Maggie Thompson

[Note: We've collected comics since before there *was* a comics "fandom." While the Earth's crust was cooling, we were packing away issues of ***CLASSICS ILLUSTRATED*** and ***MAD*** and ***OUR GANG***. But we're only two of many people who were rummaging through second-hand comics bins and we're only two of many people who came out of the woodwork and joined together in an anarchic "comic-dom" in the early 1960s. Other comics fans will have had different experiences of those high and far-off times, and we'd enjoy hearing from them and including their counterpoint to what has, so far, been a duet. Write to: ***Don and Maggie Thompson, 8786 Hendricks Road, Mentor, Ohio 44060.***]

Last time, we covered the first comic art fan awards—called the Alley Awards. DC took its place as the pre-eminent favorite of early comics fans, and their favorite favorite was ***"Flash of Two Worlds"*** from ***FLASH #123***, a story which reintroduced the Golden Age Flash and retold the origins of both. Comics fans are still pretty much suckers for visitors from the Golden Age, notwithstanding the almost-invariable failure of regularly published comics devoted to them. As visitors, the old-timers are welcomed as novel and fascinating. It's when the guests settle in and start to talk about what's happened to them recently and spin yarns of current derring-do that they become unwelcome bores. But back to 1962.

1962 saw the growth of affection in comics fandom for a new type of super-hero comic; it really was a new type, and the fan awards of 1962 showed it. (You've begun to think we're going to tie development of this column to the fan awards. You're absolutely correct. How better can we trace fandom's history than through its affections and foibles as revealed via its favorites? We will ramble a bit far afield from them now and then, but they'll lend a skeleton to this work which we can flesh out as we go. Had enough metaphors yet?)

Jerry Bails tallied the second Alley Awards, which now had twenty categories and thirty-one fans making up the nominating ballot from which fandom chose its favorites. (Results appeared in ***ALTER EGO #6***, Winter 1963-4.)

That was the professional division, the second that encompassed all comics which had been published in 1962. (Actually, if you compare the first and second annual awards, you'll note that some categories were added or changed. Instead of one "story" category, there were two. "Best Adventure Hero/ine Not Having Own Comic Book" was dropped.

THE ALLEY AWARDS FOR COMICS: 1962

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1. Best Comic Book of the Year: ***FANTASTIC FOUR***
2. Best Editor of a Comics Group: Julius Schwartz
3. Best Script Writer: Gardner Fox
4. Best Pencil Artist: Carmine Infantino
5. Best Inker: Murphy Anderson
6. Best Hero: Hawkman
7. Best Group of Heroes: Fantastic Four
8. Best Villain: Sub-Mariner
9. Best Supporting Character: The Thing
10. Best Short Story: ***"Origin of Spider-Man" (AMAZING FANTASY #15)***
11. Best Book-Length Story: ***"The Planet That Came to a Standstill" (MYSTERY IN SPACE #75)*** (this was a JLA/Adam Strange crossover; crossovers were still very rare in those days and fans loved them.)
12. Best Single Comic Book Cover: ***BRAVE & BOLD #42*** (Hawkman)
13. Comic Book Most in Need of Improvement: ***BATMAN***
14. Hero/ine Most Worthy of Revival: The Spectre

"Best Single Issue of a Comic Book" was also dropped. One "artist" category was changed to two, to allow for differences between pencilling and inking. This was questioned by some fans, who pointed out that few voters were qualified to judge the matter in comics where the division was uncredited. But it was retained for years. Editor, writer, and villain came in for attention. And, already, "Worst Comic" was altered to that "Most in Need of Improvement"; it was always an embarrassment to people conducting the poll, though it allowed the fans to let off steam. As some noted at the time, there were a lot of worse comics around that didn't get noticed because they were so awful that no one bought them. On the other hand, some fans were upset because they felt compelled to support super-hero comics and so bought ***BATMAN*** despite the depths to which it had fallen in those days.)

In addition to the "pro" section, in the second awards, there was an "ama" division, listing the favorite fan efforts. It was done with weighted voting on a scale of 5. Winners were listed as follows:

15. Comic Fanzines of 1961 and 1962: ***ALTER-EGO #1-4*** (Jerry Bails & Roy Thomas) 4.79

15. Special Projects : ***INDEX TO ALL-STAR COMICS*** (Jerry Bails) 4.47

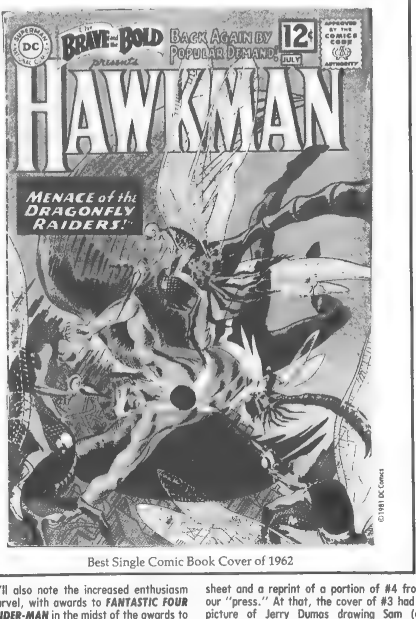
17. Articles: ***"The Light of the Green Lantern"*** (Jerry Bails) 4.47

18. Features: ***"Profiles on Collectors"*** (Bill White) 4.29

19. Strips: ***"Bestest League of America"*** (Roy Thomas) 4.19

20. Fiction: ***"The Reincarnation of The Spectre"*** (Roy Thomas) 4.13

You can see that Roy Thomas was a favorite of the fans, even when he was doing fan writing. The voting covered a two-year period, since there had been no fan fan awards for the previous year. It should also be noted that voting tended to concentrate on the fanzines whose readers got the ballot and on those which aimed for circulation growth. (***ALTER EGO***'s editors were trying to get it distributed to the largest possible number of fans—thus ***earning*** its reputation as a seminal point in comics fandom. We tried, as did Dick and Pat Lupoff with ***XERO***, to keep our circulation as small as possible.) With its lighthearted, friendly atmosphere and enthusiasm for its subject, ***ALTER EGO*** delighted fans looking for fun (a take-off on The Justice League) and information (articles on many super-heroes) pertaining to their hobby.



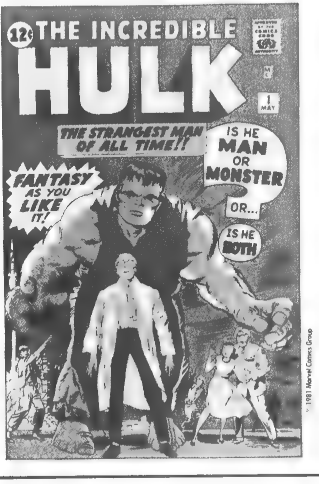
Best Single Comic Book Cover of 1962

You'll also note the increased enthusiasm for Marvel, with awards to ***FANTASTIC FOUR*** and ***SPIDER-MAN*** in the midst of the awards to DC. "The Marvel Age of Comics" had begun in earnest—though it would do even better in the next year's fan awards. For a picture of how the Marvels of this time struck readers who had primarily experienced the DC view of the costumed world, read Fred Hembeck's ***BAN HEMBECK!*** It is a brilliant picture of what happened to comics and their readers then.

What were **we** doing in 1962? We produced two more issues of our fanzine, ***COMIC ART***. #3 came out in April (200 copies); #4 came out in December (250 copies). It was the last year in which we were able to churn the zine out more than once a year. In fact, the next year (partly because of a financially-crippling Cleveland newspaper strike) saw only a fact sheet and a reprint of a portion of #4 from our "press." At that, the cover of #3 had a picture of Jerry Dumas drawing Sam (of Dumas' ***SAM'S STRIP***), who was saying as he was being drawn, "We know ***COMIC ART #3*** is late but we're doing the best we can!" (Actually, since ***CA*** was ***always*** published on an irregular schedule, it was ***never*** late. Just because we haven't done an issue since October 1968 is no reason to think the next one is late. Right?)

1962 was a big year for us. Whereas #3 came out when we were still Don Thompson and Maggie Curtis, #4 was edited by Don and Maggie Thompson—the first comics fan marriage. (Ah, another first, for those of you keeping track!) (Maybe that explains how we found other things to do in 1963 besides publish a fanzine.)

Fandom Zone



And 1962 was a good year for fandom in general. While ***ALTER-EGO*** announced it was to become an annual, ***THE COMICOLLECTOR*** (mostly ads) and ***ON THE DRAWING BOARD*** (comics news) came out from Jerry Bails, as did the ***ALL-STAR INDEX*** mentioned above. G. B. Love had begun ***THE ROCKET'S BLAST*** in December of the previous year and it was becoming a fixture in fandom, just as ***XERO*** was heading towards its demise (with only one more issue planned after 1962). (***XERO*** had caught on with a vengeance. Still selling at three for a dollar, it had found a hard-core of enthusiasts, mostly in SF fandom, that had turned it into one of the best fanzines ever done. Dick and Pat Lupoff had been almost overcome by their Frankenstein monster of a publication which had become something of a focal point of SF fandom, with such contributors of articles and letters as Walt Willis, Bob Leman, Robert Coulson, Lin Carter, Steve Stiles, Gary Deindorfer (with a brilliant in-group take-off on ***DONDI, "Fandi"***), Richard Kyle, Avram Davidson, Jack Chalker, Rog Ebert, Larry Ivie, Dan Adkins, Frederik Pohl, Harry Warner, Bob Briney, John Baxter, and Donald E. Westlake. (One of our favorite letters in those days, though, was from Andy Zerbe, who wrote, "I have just read ***XERO #8*** and I think it is the best fanzine I have read yet, but I'll probably change my mind when I get around to reading more fanzines.") Issue #9 ran 100 interior pages—which may indicate why the Lupoffs called it quits with #10.)

As we said, though, 1962 was a ***good*** year for fandom. One fandom emerged in that year to flourish briefly and then disappear—until several of its big names emerged again in publications like ***PLAYBOY***. That was the minifandom of satire fans. Probably its best publication was Joe Pilati's ***SMUDGE***, but there were several short-lived fanzines featuring work by such people as Jay Kinney, Jay Lynch, Skip Williamson, and Don Dohler. Edgar Rice Burroughs' fandom also took a new lease on life at about this time. And more and more amateur-created super-heroes began to appear. Fanzines featuring fan strips began to proliferate.

We did comics reviews in ***COMIC ART #3:*** "Unfortunately, ***THE HULK,*** newest from Kirby and Lee, isn't worthy of such faint praise as that [we had just given to ***THE FANTASTIC FOUR***]. It stinks. A comic-book-length rendition of one of their hack monster stories with a continuing character modeled more or less on The Thing." We'll stick with that review today—at least as it pertains to ***THE HULK #1*** (which is $120-$480 in ***OVERSTREET #10***).

It is of at least mild interest today to read quotes from reviews written in Spring 1962: ***"JOHN FORCE, MAGIC AGENT*** [#1 is 75¢-$2.25 in ***OVERSTREET #10***], has an undeserved reputation as the worst of the current crop of comics. It comes close, but is nosed out for the honor by ***BLACKHAWK, AQUAMAN*** [#1 is $7-$21], ***RIP HUNTER—TIME MASTER*** [#1 is $4-$12], ***CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN***, and ***TOMAHAWK***. And it finishes leagues behind the real worst comic, ***WONDER WOMAN.***" We also commented, "the top quality comic book is now, as it has been for years, ***UNCLE SCROOGE.***"

COMIC ART was never as devoted to super-heroes as the rest of comics fandom; we featured coverage of the humorous work of Warren Tufts—and the #4 cover featured Ed Wheelan and his ***MINUTE MOVIES.*** (In addition to an article on the strip, we also had articles in that issue on Sergio Aragones, James Swinnerton, and Barbie. We were diverse.) We even reviewed a new comic strip: ***"BEN CASEY***, drawn for NEA by Neal Adams, is hopelessly bad. Adams is a fair artist, but his strip has no continuity, even from panel to panel in a day's episode." A fair artist, hm? This was the first look most comics fans had at Adams' work as such. We stand by the review of Adams' work ***at the time;*** we'd now say he improved a bit later.

We felt that the FF, Thor, and Hulk's strips had improved markedly by year's end—and still think so. That either means we're intransigent stick-in-the-muds (sticks-in-the-mud?)—or that our taste was just as fine then as it is now.

The point is that the Silver Age of Comics was well under way by this time. ***BULLWINKLE*** was well under way as a marvelous prime-time animated cartoon.

And fans were starting to get a real sense of community. There had been no conventions as yet—not even a comics-fan get-together as such (aside from conversations among comics-oriented science-fiction fans at conventions and SF club meetings).

Nor would there be in 1963.

But we were all getting to know each other better.●

Next Month:

1963: THE CALM BEFORE THE STORM.

1963: THE CALM BEFORE THE STORM

[Note: We'd like to remind the readers of what we've been saying in the previous four installments—that our view is, of necessity, a personal one. We can only check our own files for information on the early days of comics fandom. For that matter, many of those papers are "filed" in boxes in our attic, unreachable for the time being. We'd be grateful for alternate views of the time, and you can send them either to ***COMICS FEATURE*** or directly to us, ***Don and Maggie Thompson, 8786 Hendricks Road, Mentor, Ohio 44060.*** Thanks.]

by Don and Maggie Thompson

1963 saw the last issue of ***XERO***, one of the seminal forces in comics fandom. Dick and Pat Lupoff had begun it as what seemed to be just another science-fiction fanzine, but their interests were unusual and varied enough to attract attention, and their skill at expressing them was such that they kept the attention they attracted. Installments of the ***"All in Color for a Dime"*** series on old comic books continued, and the letter column of ***XERO #10*** (the only ***XERO*** of that year and the last issue of the magazine) had letters from Larry and Noreen Shaw, John Baxter, Harry Warner, Rick Sneary, Anthony Boucher, Vic Ryan, Eric Bentcliffe, Mike McInerney, Ron Haydock, Richard Kyle, Paul Williams, John Boardman, Bob Briney, Steve Stiles, and Betty Kujawa. ***#10*** had the customary mix of articles and opinion (including a fascinating piece by Bob Briney on Sax Rohmer's writing) and even some fiction (a short story by John Berry and the delightful-to-this-day ***"Two Flashes Meet the Purple Slugheap!"*** by Landon Chesney).

XERO impressed science-fiction fans so much that it won the Hugo for best SF fanzine of 1963, and we got to ride back from Washington, D.C. to New York City in the Lupoff's convertible with Phil Harrell in the back seat, endlessly polishing that gold-colored spaceship on his lap, an embarrassing sight. (Think about it.)

So 1963 saw ***XERO***'s influence leave the world of comics fandom—and comics fandom began to gather its forces to maintain its own existence. There were still many science-fiction fans who collected and discussed comics, but comics fandom began to grow and flourish separately as its own world from this point. Few were the comics fanzines that would feature letters from the likes of writer-editor-critic Anthony Boucher (who wrote to ***XERO*** to point out that a recent issue of the French edition of ***ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE*** announced the formation- of Le Club des Bandes Dessinees, the French comics club). We don't mean to knock the comics fandom of the mid-sixties, but there really grew to be less such input for a time. Comics fandom became composed primarily of persons interested in comics and nothing else, rather than persons who were interested in comics among many other things. There is a very great difference.

(Incidentally, we should point out that this column is a view of the development of comics fandom in the United States. 1963 marked the beginning of ***MODESTY BLAISE*** in England and the organization of the above-mentioned French comics club. SOCERLID, a major French comics club founded by people like Pierre Couperie and Maurice Horn, would begin the next year, as would ***DOWN UNDER***, John Ryan's comics fanzine from Australia. But we are not really equipped to discuss this aspect of fandom's development. We'd like to hear about it from fans from other continents, though.)

The third Alley Awards (given for publications done during 1963) had twenty-eight categories. That was almost a third more than the previous year; roughly 250 ballots were cast. We'll discuss the actual tallying in our coverage of 1964 (when the counting took place), but for now we'll simply mention that ***THE COMIC READER #24*** carried the results.

You may be able to see some trends emerging in all of this. It was the second year that Marvel had really been in competition, and it took two-thirds of the categories. You can also see the heavy super-hero weighting of the awards, right down to the fan awards; only two categories did not have super-hero-associated winners, the category for best humorous comic and the one in which an in-depth examination of the comic strip ***MINUTE MOVIES*** won as best article.

These awards are interesting in another way; they were something of an attempt to

ALLEY AWARDS FOR 1963

I. Pro Categories

1. Best Editor: Stan Lee
2. Best Writer: Stan Lee
3. Best Artist: Carmine Infantino

II. Best Comics

4. Adventure-Hero: ***SPIDER-MAN*** (31% of the vote)

5. General Fantasy: ***STRANGE ADVENTURES*** (47%)

6. Mundane Fiction: ***SGT. FURY & HIS HOWLING COMMANDOS*** (62 %)

Humorous: ***UNCLE SCROOGE*** (34%)

8. Favorite Short Story: ***"The Human Torch Meets Captain America" (STRANGE TALES #114)***

9. Favorite Annual: ***FANTASTIC FOUR ANNUAL #1*** (68%)

10. Favorite Novel: ***"Crisis on Earth I and II" (JLA #21-22)***

11. Top Hero: Spider-Man

12. Top Group: Fantastic Four

13. Top Supporting Character: The Thing

14. Top Villain: Sub-Mariner

15. Strip Favored for Revival: Dr. Fate (214 votes)

III. Amateur Division (on a scale of 5)

16. Article: ***"Minute Movies"*** Hal Lynch & Vern Coriell ***(COMIC ART #4)*** 4.31

17. Illustrated Strip: ***"The Eclipse"*** Drury Moroz & Ronn Foss ***(ALTER EGO #5)*** 4.22

18. Fanzine Fiction: ***"The Black Panther"*** John Wright ***(KOMIX #2)*** 4.06

19. Single Illustration: ***STARSTUDDED COMICS #2*** cover (Buddy Saunders) 4.28

20. Fan Project: ***AUTHORITATIVE INDEX TO DC COMICS*** (Howard Keltner & Jerry Bails) 4.50

21. Fan Artist: Ronn Foss 4.19

22. Fan Writer: Jerry Bails 4.40

23. Comics Amazine [Fanzine]: ***THE COMIC READER #15-#20*** (Jerry Bails) 4.53

CAN I DO ANYTHING TO STOP YOU JUSTICE LEAGUE CHARACTERS? I'LL TURN YOU INTO SOLID LEAD! MAYBE THAT'LL HOLD YOU FOR A WHILE!
YOU'RE GOING TO TURN ME IN TO A DOCTOR, DOCTOR, ALCHEMIST!
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IV. Write-In Categories

24. Strip That Should Be Improved: ***JUSTICE LEAGUE*** (15%)

25. Cross-Over of DC Heroes for ***BRAVE & BOLD:*** Hawkman and Flash

26. Artist Preferred on ***SEA DEVILS:*** Joe Kubert (70%)

27. Artist Preferred on ***JUSTICE LEAGUE:*** Murphy Anderson (32%)

28. Comic Displaying Best Interior Color Work: ***MYSTERY IN SPACE*** (22%)

communicate to the fans and pros something of the way fans would like ***to see the comics go.*** Whether fans should be catered to has long been debated in the field, and it may be a question with a changing answer. Circulations of comics in 1963 were enormous by today's standards, and cover prices less (12¢). Comics were overwhelmingly bought by children, and only a tiny fraction of the audience gave serious critical thought to illustrated fiction or "graphic stories." (Maggie once asked a child about comics in the mid-sixties, "Do you read ***SPIDER-MAN?***" she asked. "Oh, no!" the girl replied. "I ***hate*** spiders!")

If all the people in comics fandom had suddenly stopped buying comic books in 1963, it wouldn't have made a dent in circulation figures. As a result (and since comics ***fans'*** interests are not necessarily those of the ***comics reading public at large***), editors tolerated fans but didn't feel much inclination to follow suggestions. By the end of 1975, fandom was a strong enough force to foul up the distribution of ***HOWARD THE DUCK***, with fans and dealers combining to turn it into an instant collector's item. But in 1963, there was no such thing as a "comics specialty shop," and fandom was a tiny thing.

Mind you, there was an activity that would affect comics dramatically in later years. 1963 saw The Texas Trio's first issue of ***STARSTUDDED COMICS*** and the emergence of more and more amateur writers and artists producing strip after strip for the delight of working in the medium of comics art. Some of these would go on to become professionals; some of them would simply inspire fans who would, in turn, become professionals.

You'll note, moreover, that Jerry Bails continues to pop up in fan polls. He was the major moving figure of the early days of comics fandom, constantly acting as an inciting force in different aspects of the microcosm. Roy Thomas recently commented to us that, while he helped out on ***ALTER-EGO***, it was Jerry who had been the real foundation of the magazine, and there would not have been an ***ALTER-EGO*** without Jerry. (It seems especially appropriate that Jerry will be a 1981 San Diego Comic-Con guest of honor. Comics fandom literally would not have been the same without him, though he has not maintained a high visibility to today's comics fandom. His contributions have been varied and fundamental.) 1963 is by no means the last time his activities in the history of the fan world will find his name listed.

Our own efforts in 1963 were less visible than in some other years. We were financially crippled by what was at that point the longest-running newspaper strike in American history (129 days). We were married in the summer of 1962, and Maggie was well into her junior year at Oberlin College, when the Cleveland newspaper strike began in November 1962. (Don works for the ***CLEVELAND PRESS.***) That winter was bitterly cold, we had little money, and by the time 1963 was well under way, we were well into the hole financially. That doesn't tend to produce much in the way of exciting fan activity.

As we wrap up discussions of 1963, it might be the place to caution readers who are new to the world of fandom: Real life, however exciting fandom may be, is real life. In times of crisis (whether of health or wealth or sanity), fandom is ***and should be*** the first thing to go. The comics fan in us is upset at a newspaper strike because of the loss of consecutive runs of strips. But when shortage of food hits at the same time, a comic-strip hiatus loses importance.

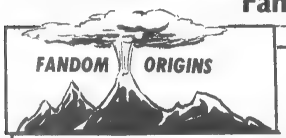
Think of that the next time a fanzine you expect in the mail is a month late. The editor may have job or domestic problems, ill relatives, or severe personal health problems. By all means, ask the editor about it, but don't be nasty; you may need people to be polite to you someday.

1963 may not have been a landmark year in comics fandom, but forces were building to make 1964 a time of change. ●

NEXT MONTH:

"Getting Together"

Fandom Zone



GETTING TOGETHER

by Don and Maggie Thompson

[Note: Remember, we still want to hear from those of you reading this who have recollections of those early days of comics fandom. We can easily go back in our coverage to make additions or corrections, so do write to us with both. Write to ***Don and Maggie Thompson, 8786 Hendricks Road, Mentor, Ohio 44060***.]

For three full years, the world and comics fandom had changed. Since comics fandom had begun to form, events in "the real world" had made the country a different place from what it had been when ***XERO #1*** first saw print. Racial unrest and turmoil and rebellion against officially sanctioned segregation had come to a head, and a turning point in American history occurred with the assassination of John Kennedy. In the intervening years, John Glenn had become the first American in space, the first privately-owned satellite had been launched to speed TV programs across the Atlantic, compulsory prayer in public schools had been outlawed, and the first military companies from the U.S. had arrived in Viet Nam. In a different sort of cross-cultural event, the Beatles had become increasingly popular in America.

Now, it was 1964, which turned out to be a year in which fandom and the world at large witnessed events that affected each other for years to come.

During 1964, a civil rights act went into effect which fundamentally moved the United States into the 20th Century racially. That same year, the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution went into effect, committing this country to behave as though a declaration of war was in effect with Viet Nam. President Johnson was elected as a "peace candidate," and campus unrest began to escalate as racial unrest gradually settled down after a "long, hot Summer" of riots in northern cities.

Against this backdrop, the slow expansion of comics fandom took place. If it seems a bit odd to emphasize national events at this point, keep in mind that most of the population of that comics fandom was intensely affected by all of it. Comics fandom consisted almost entirely of young people of draft age, mostly male, often in high-school or college settings. Few were members of racial minorities, but fandom was never a deliberately segregationist group and—feeling itself to be a minority—encouraged "membership" by everyone. Politics, however, were another story, and there were comics fans of all views, though radicalization had not become extreme (despite Goldwater's statement that "Extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice".

Whatever the outside forces were, comics fandom suddenly put on a growing spurt. Fan meetings began—and increased. The first weekend fan party was held by (yes, him again) Jerry Bails.

Ow, wow! A fan party! Big deal! Well, yes, it ***was*** a big deal. Whereas small numbers of fans in large communities might have met from time to time before then, this was the first time that fans from many different areas got together in a weekend event. Jerry lived in Detroit and volunteered his house for the purpose of what some called an "Alley Tally." You may recall that the fan awards ("Alley" Awards) for 1963 had been voted on in twenty-eight categories—and that several of those categories had been write-ins. (For example, fans could list what strip they'd most like to see revived, what artist they'd prefer on ***SEA DEVILS***, and so on.) This meant that the chore

Fandom Zone

of counting out about two hundred fifty ballots was a staggering one, and Jerry thought a group of fans might as well stagger together. We came from Cleveland, other fans came from other areas of the Midwest, and we all descended upon Jerry and his wife and children for two days of partying and talking and ballot-counting in Detroit.

There was a spirit of fun and good will and delight at meeting friends known only by mail. We can recall sitting at a table to discuss art with Ronn Foss. And we can recall how everyone's punch-drunk total exhaustion increased, as fans tried late at night to keep long strings of figures straight. At one point, Mike Tuohey stood on his head in a corner, wigged out by endless combinations suggested on ballot after ballot in the category in the category which would decide what cross-over of DC heroes fans most want to see in ***THE BRAVE AND THE BOLD***. (Hawkman and Flash won as a combination, but you might be hard-put to imagine some of the more far-fetched ones.)

It was a delight (though Jerry and his family must have had constitutions of iron to survive it with the cheery good will they maintained throughout).

If a fan party had been all that 1964 offered in the history of fannish developments, it would still have been a turning point. But other things occurred in 1964, day-to-day tastes of the fans being reflected in the fourth Alley Awards (this time tallied in 1965 by Paul Gambaccini for The Academy of Comic Book Fans and Collectors, just formed). (Results ran in ***THE COMIC READER #35-#37***, March 1965 - May 1965. The Executive Board was still nonvoting, though by now it had changed composition and was elected by sporadic vote.)

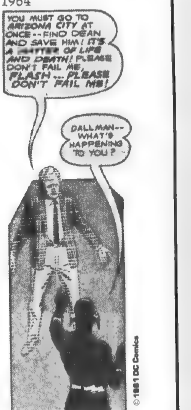
You'll notice that fan tastes were becoming slightly more diversified. For the first time, four companies were represented with awards, though Marvel and DC still took the lion's share.

The best fan comic strip appeared in a fanzine new in 1964, one that was one of the very best, in our opinion. Born as ***FANTASY ILLUSTRATED***, it was edited by Bill Spicer and became one of the journals that emphasized an almost scholarly approach to comics art. The tone was light-hearted, but Spicer maintained an interest in providing thought-provoking looks at the problems inherent in creating comics art. In fact, ***FANTASY ILLUSTRATED*** became in later years ***GRAPHIC STORY MAGAZINE***, and the stories it ran (for it was primarily another fanzine of fan-produced comic art) were mostly intended to be more than just another super-hero pastiches. EC's influence was strongly felt among FI's contributors, and methods of story-telling were explored here.

We did an issue of ***COMIC ART*** in 1964, and it elaborates the picture of that year in fandom. It cost us about a dime to send a 44-page fanzine, and we were griping that that was a considerable part of the expense of producing a fanzine. (Check the postage on the next medium-size fanzine you get in the mail to find another way fanning has changed in the last seventeen years; by the time you read this, costs will have risen ***again***.) It wasn't too difficult to maintain fannish contacts by mail when a first-class letter cost a nickel. Ah, but the ZIP Code had recently taken hold, and that (we were assured) would help to keep postage costs down.

Another trend began in 1964, we note in looking through ***COMIC ART #5***. Don wrote, in an open note to Stan Lee: "If you ***must*** publish serials, won't you (a) write the whole story at once, so the halves will be of comparable quality, and (b) warn the reader at the

THE ALLEY AWARDS FOR 1964


YOU MUST GO TO ARIZONA CITY AT ONCE--FIND DEAN AND SAVE HIM! IT'S A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH! PLEASE DON'T FAIL ME, FLASH--PLEASE DON'T FAIL ME!
DALLMAN--WHAT'S HAPPENING TO YOU?
© 1965 DC Comics

I. Pro Category

1. Best Adventure Hero Comic Book: ***SPIDER-MAN*** (39%)
2. Best Regularly Published Fantasy Comic: ***FORBIDDEN WORLDS***
3. Best Humorous Comic Book: ***HERBIE*** (42%)
4. Best Miscellaneous Fiction: ***SGT. FURY AND HIS HOWLING COMMANDOS*** (65%)
5. Best Editor: Stan Lee
6. Best Writer: Stan Lee
7. Best Pencil Artist: Carmine Infantino (26%)
8. Best Inking Artist: Murphy Anderson (47%)
9. Best Comic-Book Cover: ***DETECTIVE #329***
10. Best Short Story: ***"Doorway to the Unknown" (FLASH #148)***
11. Best Novel: ***"Captain America Joins the Avengers" (AVENGERS #4)***
12. Best Giant Comic: ***SPIDER-MAN ANNUAL #1*** (50%)
13. Comic Regularly Displaying Best Color Work: ***MAGNUS ROBOT FIGHTER***
14. Worst Regularly Published Comic: ***WONDER WOMAN*** (46%)
15. Best Hero: Spider-Man
16. Best Supporting Character: The Thing (50%+)
17. Best Villain: Doctor Doom
18. Best Group of Characters: Fantastic Four
19. Best New Strip or Book: Captain America
20. Strip Most Desired for Revival: Spectre (29 votes)

II. Fan Category (on a scale of 5)

F1. Best Article in a Fanzine: TIE ***"Lee"*** (Rick Weingroff) 4.21; ***"One Man's Family"*** (Roy Thomas) 4.21

F2. Best Regular Fanzine Feature: ***"Information Center"*** (Bob Jennings) 4.17

F3. Best Fan Comic Strip: ***"Adam Link"*** (Binder/Spicer/Berry) 4.61

F4. Best Ditto/Mimeo Cover: ***BATMANIA #1*** (Biljo White) 4.46

F5. Best Cover (Other Reproduction): ***ALTER EGO #1*** (Biljo White) 4.61

F6. Best Fan Fiction: ***"Nemesis of Evil"*** (Victor Baron) 4.23

F7. Best Fan Project: ***"Who's Who"*** and ***"Supplement"*** (Jerry Bails and Larry Lattanzi) 4.32

F8. Best Fanzine: ***ALTER EGO #7*** (Roy Thomas) 4.67

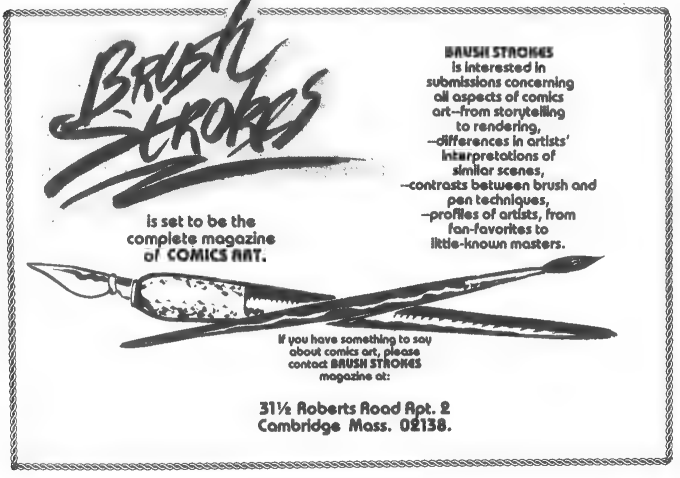
beginning that the story is continued? Today, it's taken for granted that most Marvel stories are continued, and no one is ever surprised when episodes vary widely in quality. Obviously, Marvel's answer to both questions was, "No."

But there was another event in 1964 that was but the first of countless events that today occur all over the nation. We ran a two-part article (one part by Dick Lupoff, one part by Larry Ivie) on it for the conclusion of ***COMIC ART #5***. It was the first—the very first—comics convention. There had been fan meetings in Detroit and Chicago and at the home of Russ Manning. But this was an actual, official convention. Comicon I had a program with speakers from the industry and interludes in which trading and conversation among fans went on. It was not an enormous con committee, nor was it staged at a hotel; there had been a committee and grand plans, but both foundered. One fan, Bernie Bubnis, picked up the pieces and almost singlehandedly managed to put on the event for half a day in a New York City hall just off 14th Street. Larry Ivie remarked, "In reality, the past three science fiction conventions—with their hordes of 'living' comic book heroes and villains at the costume balls, and comic book slide talks, and comic book sale areas—presented far more for the comic book fans than the first actual comic con." The con was plagued by a lack of publicity, a hard-to-locate hall (with many prospective attendees simply unable to find the place), and a time impossible for many adults to make (a weekday afternoon). But it happened, it happened in 1964, and Bernie Bubnis was responsible; that it happened at all was to his credit.

1964 brough fans face to face, but October brought us a new sort of meeting place. That month, another aspect of fandom appeared, once again formed from Jerry Bails' enthusiasm: ***CAPA-alpha***, the first amateur publishing association of comics fandom. Jerry argued to an assortment of fans who knew each other that they'd save time and money by substituting a quarterly small-circulation fanzine among themselves. This way, open letters to the group would substitute for first-class, individual letters. It seemed logical enough (and, indeed, amateur publishing associations had flourished for decades in science-fiction fandom). Jerry was the first Central Mailer and set up the plan. Dues covered postage; minimum activity from each member was four pages a quarter; mailings were monthly; the first issue came out in October. It took us some time to be convinced, but we eventually succumbed to Jerry's invitation, and ***CAPA-alpha*** became a forum for fandom's publishers, eventually spawning such things as Mike Barrier's ***FUNNYWORLD***. ●

Next:
"FANDOM EXPOSED!"

Due to our double-*FEATURE* format, we are presenting two installments of *"Fandom Origins"* this issue. *"Fandom Exposed"* appears elsewhere in *"The Fansom Zone."*


Brush Strokes
is set to be the complete magazine of COMICS ART.
BRUSH STROKES is interested in submissions concerning all aspects of comics art—from storytelling to rendering, —differences in artists' interpretations of similar scenes, —contrasts between brush and pen techniques, —profiles of artists, from fan-favorites to little-known masters.
If you have something to say about comics art, please contact BRUSH STROKES magazine at:
31½ Roberts Road Apt. 2
Cambridge Mass. 02138.

Fandom Zone

FANDOM... EXPOSED!"

By Don and Maggie Thompson

[Note: We've been asking that readers who, like us, were part of the early days of comics fandom send us comments on "***Fandom Origins.***" You'll remember that in our fourth column—the one on 1962—we wrote about the brief life of satire fandom and the excellent ***SMUDGE***, a fanzine produced by Joe Pilati, who ran early work by such talented people as Don Dohler, Jay Kinney, Jay Lynch, and Skip Williamson. Joe wrote to let us know what he's doing these days: "In my present work (I'm involved with a number of national labor union mags and sorta rad-lib outfits, such as they are), I have the occasional great pleasure of buying and using artwork from folks like Steve Stiles, Denis Kitchen and Peter Poplaski. Year after year goes by and I never seem to get around to publishing ***SMUDGE #5***. Mayhaps I could (for half-heartedly have) convinced folks like Elder, Lynch, Spiegelman, and youse to 'update' things you wrote or drew for ***SMUDGE*** in 1962-3. (Or to write or draw entirely new stuff, which I would intend to package in a 36-page offset mag with color covers or something.)"

You see? Old fen never die; they still scheme about putting out just one more issue. And satire fandom never died; it just sold to ***PLAYBOY***. If you were around in the Good Old Days (or have questions about them we've failed to answer), write us: Don and Maggie Thompson, 8786 Hendricks Road, Mentor, Ohio 44060.)

1965 was an incredible year for comics fandom. To begin with, it was the year that the rest of America discovered comics fandom.

Aside from features on existing comic strips and such, magazines had run no articles on comics collecting. All at once, that changed.

In its February 15, 1965 issue, ***NEWSWEEK*** ran a piece on "Superfans and Batmaniacs," and we all suddenly became known nationwide as a bunch of eccentrics who were loony enough to waste our time and money on funnybooks. Fans were shaken and nonplussed. Nor were they alone in being targets of national hilarity. The ***NEWSWEEK*** article picked up on the old canard about the possible homosexuality of Bruce Wayne and Dick Grayson and tried to pass the reputation on to Peter Parker. That was the general level of the report on our microcosm.

That first article was followed by ones on the first international exhibition of comic strips (***TIME*** for March 5; ***NEWSWEEK*** for March 8) and on the "second annual convention of the Academy of Comic-Book Fans and Collectors" (***NEW YORKER*** for August 21).

Naturally, our files being what they are, we can't turn up any of the articles this month; in our "it's never too late" fashion, we are continuing the hunt. In the meantime, though, we recall that fandom was appalled at the patronizing attention it was given.

We weren't quite so taken aback. As we said at the time (in our fanzine for Jerry Bails' comics amateur publishing association):

"Now come on, people, what did you ***expect***!? What reactions have you been getting from the 'outside' world when you've talked of your hobby, anyway? Respectful interest and 'where do you go to sign up' responses? Or amused amazement? Children's literature is held in contempt by many so-called literates —what response can you expect, then, for comic art, which is regarded with contempt and dismay by promoters of children's literature?

"How can you blame people who never claimed to be doing other than writing for mass audiences for putting things in a way to appeal to that audience?

"We were delighted, ourselves, with the approach taken by ***NEWSWEEK***; we had feared something along the lines of, 'Hey, you know how much you can get for your old comics, everybody!?!?' Instead, that aspect was remarkably understated (even if we don't know of anybody who's ever paid $100 for ***ACTION #1***—or even asked that much for it)... And we were taken aback, rather, by the reactions of many fans, who say simply, 'I'm not a collector, so what the hell?' But a comic fan who does not care anything for the prices comics are commanding can't be too damned interested in comics."

Then we went into a discussion of the need to keep prices down. (Why is it that we always hear in the news media about some incredibly high price being "paid for" a certain comic long before we see that high price routinely on dealers' lists? Believe us, $100 for ***ACTION #1*** was not a routine price in early 1965. Almost as a matter of course, though, the *reporting* of a high price as average tends to be a self-fulfilling prophecy.)

Roy Thomas commented on the ***NEWSWEEK*** article that year in his apazine, and we reprinted it in our ***COMIC ART***; it was supposed interview between ***NEWSWEEK*** and Roy (editor of ***ALTER-EGO***), "***NEWSWEEK*** Meets ***ALTER-EGO***":

NW: Tell me, when did you first ***become*** a comic-book fanatic?

RT: ***NEWSWEEK*** said we were fanatics; ***we*** didn't. We're no more fanatical than the average stamp- or coin-collector, and we read a lot more.

NW: (Over the sound of his scribbling) Hmm... overt denial... typical of type... (More audibly) Uh, Mr. Thomas, if you're not a fanatic, why are you willing to pay $100 for the June 1939 issue of ***ACTION COMICS***?

RT: I'm not.

NW: You're ***not***? But it says right here—***NEWSWEEK***, Feb. 15, 1965—that issue 'has

Fandom Zone

since become a $100 collector's item among the country's band of first-edition comic-book fanatics.'

RT: Well, I don't know of anybody who ever paid $100 for it. Personally, I've never even seen it ***advertised*** for that much. But then, I haven't really been ***looking***.

By the end of 1965, even more attention had been brought to the world of comics with the publication of Jules Feiffer's ***GREAT COMIC BOOK HEROES*** anthology which, for the first time in years, made classic super-hero stories available to a wide audience. Reprints came from ***SUPERMAN #1***, ***SUPERMAN #3***, ***BATMAN #1***, ***FLASH #1***, ***ALL-AMERICAN #16*** (first appearance of Green Lantern), ***ALL-STAR #1*** (for The Spectre), ***FLASH #5*** (for Hawkman), ***WONDER WOMAN #2***, ***POLICE #1*** (first appearance of Plastic Man), ***CAPTAIN AMERICA #1***, two issues of ***MARVEL MYSTERY COMICS*** (for Sub-Mariner and a Torch-and-Toro story), and ***"The Spirit"*** story for July 20, 1941. No one was doing reprints of comic-book stories; this collection was a treasure trove for the fan who couldn't afford the comics and didn't have a prayer of seeing them collected any other way.

Also during this time, the Warren line was plunging into the comics field. ***CREEPY #1*** had already been published, and ***EERIE #1*** emerged as a companion magazine in an odd way. In order to protect the title, Jim Warren published an all-black-and-white, offset edition of the magazine, just over 5" x 7", composed of stories he already had on hand. It was published but never received any widespread newsstand distribution. It just looked like a fanzine with excellent art. In later years it (and a Warren second printing) became enough of a collector's item to inspire forgery, and, although the current ***PRICE GUIDE*** says the unauthorized reproductions are "practically worthless," they're listed at $3 to $9.

Comics publishing, indeed, caught the attention of more than one publisher looking for a profit-maker. The unfortunately short-lived Tower Comics line brought out the enjoyable ***T.H.U.N.D.E.R. AGENTS*** in 1965. This was a title with a line of super-heroes with which, even today, many comics writers and artists would like to work. There were Dynamo, No-Man, Menthor, and the Thunder Squad, each with novel traits and many story possibilities. Dynamo, for example, was not particularly bright but got his super powers from his Thunder Belt; in one story the belt was adapted to work by voice command, and what followed was a lovely take-off on Fawcett's Captain Marvel, with Dynamo's "Excelsior!" command taking the place of Cap's "Shazam!" The super-heroes were delightful, but the line was underfinanced and didn't make it.

Two more comics conventions occurred. The Detroit Triple Fan Fair was put on by Shel Dorf July 24-25 and Dave Kaler ran the New York Comicon II July 31-August 1 in New York City. More and more fans were getting to know each other and forming groups in which to enjoy their fanac. The fan awards for 1965 show the tastes of that year's fandom. (Results were tallied by more than one counter; Glen Johnson helped [and figured he personally handled less than one hundred ballots]. We ***think*** Derrill Rothermich did the final addition and computation. Results ran in ***THE COMIC READER #47*** in Spring 1966. As usual, there was a nominating ballot from the Executive Board of the Academy of Comic Book Fans and Collectors.)

ALLEY AWARDS FOR 1965

I. PRO CATEGORIES

1. Best Adventure Hero Comic Book: ***SPIDER-MAN*** (23.4%)
2. Best Regularly Published Fantasy Comic Book: ***STRANGE ADVENTURES*** (21.2%)
3. Best Humor Comic Book: ***HERBIE*** (24.2%)
4. Best Miscellaneous Fiction: ***SGT. FURY & HIS HOWLING COMMANDOS*** (26%)
5. Best Editor: Stan Lee (26.6%)
6. Best Writer: Stan Lee (25.8%)
7. Best Pencil Artist: Wally Wood (20.4%)
8. Best Inking Artist: Murphy Anderson (24.6%)
9. Best Comic-Book Cover: ***BRAVE & BOLD #61*** (21.7%)
10. Best Short Story: ***"The Origin of the Red Skull"*** (***TALES OF SUSPENSE #66***) (14.6%)
11. Best Giant Comic: ***T.H.U.N.D.E.R. AGENTS #1*** (27.1%)
12. Best Novel: ***SHOWCASE #55*** (22.4%)
13. Comic Displaying Best Color Work: ***MAGNUS, ROBOT FIGHTER*** (25.2%)
14. Comic Most Needing Improvement: ***BLUE BEETLE*** (20.4%)
15. Best Hero: Spider-Man (14.1 %)
16. Best Supporting Character: Thing (26.4%)
17. Best Villain: Dr. Doom (25%)
18. Best Group: Fantastic Four (23.6%)
19. Best New Strip or Book: ***T.H.U.N.D.E.R. AGENTS*** (26.6%)
20. Best Revived Hero: Dr. Fate (26.6%)
21. Most Desired for Revival: Justice Society of America (25.4%)

T.H.U.N.D.E.R. #1

II. Fan Categories (on a scale of 5)

1. Best Article: ***"With Comics Down Under"*** (John Ryan) 4.51
2. Best Regular Feature: ***"On the Drawing Board"*** (Glen Johnson and Derrill Rothermich) 4.68
3. Best Fan Comic Strip: ***"The End of Bukawai"*** (***FANTASY ILLUSTRATED #3***) 4.48
4. Best Ditto/Mimeo Cover: ***BATMANIA #5*** (Biljo White) 4.38
5. Best Offset Cover: ***ALTER EGO #8*** (Biljo White) 4.57
6. Best Fan Fiction: ***"Powerman vs. The Blue Barrier"*** (George Martin) 4.29
7. Best Fan Project: New York Comicon (Dove Kaler) 4.63
8. Best Fanzine: ***ALTER EGO #8*** (Roy Thomas) 4.71

Next Month:
"Holy Heart Attack!"

Fandom Zone

FANDOM ORIGINS

HOLY HEART ATTACK!!

By Don and Maggie Thompson

[Note: As this column progresses, more and more readers will find that we're discussing a time they remember vividly. If fifteen years ago meant the discovery of comics fandom to you, how about writing ***COMICS FEATURE*** about your impressions of comics fandom at that time? Or you can write directly to us, ***Don and Maggie Thompson, 8786 Hendricks Road, Mentor, Ohio 44060***. We'll be glad to add your illuminations to this column.]

The title for this installment probably gives you a clue about the event that hit the world of comics hardest in 1966. (There were other things of interest to fandom; we'll get to them in good time.) On January 12, the first installment of the half-hour ABC-TV show ***BATMAN*** was broadcast. Comics ***really*** attracted popular attention at last.

Most fans weren't crazy about the idea.

Consider. The previous year, comics fans had been written about in terms that showed us to be strange at best. (Strange we may have been, but at least we were strange in anonymity until 1965.) ***BATMAN*** was enormously popular and at the same time showed the public at large that comics were a riot of campy humor, worth only a hearty laugh at best.

BATMAN ran initially as a two-part serial; each Wednesday at 7:30 p.m. EST (which was prime-time then), the first part would be shown, ending in a cliffhanger. Each Thursday at 7:30 p.m., the second part would resolve the problem. The show was sort of a take-off on comics and on movie serials of the 1940s—and the humor was pie-smackingly broad. Fights had superimposed "POW!," "BANG!," "CRASH!" titles; cornball lines were delivered with wooden seriousness; and villains were played for laughs.

It was all a tremendous success. "Camp" became inescapable in movies and TV. Ratings were extremely high. And fans of the show caused a national scandal you'll still find in analyses of the insensitivity of television audiences.

There were problems with a Gemini spaceflight which led to an emergency splashdown; word of the problems led ABC to break into the broadcast of ***BATMAN***, then in its first run and easily taking its time slot. Calls of protest at the interruption of the show flooded ABC stations, an event which was reported in outraged terms the next day. How ***could*** the Am-

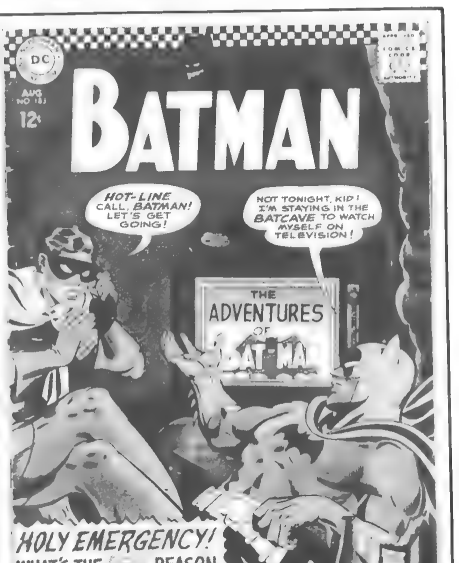
erican people prefer a silly comics-character to the real-life drama occurring at the same time?

We were there and watching the broadcast, and we'd like to set the record straight on that. What happened was that the network newsmen had enough information from NASA to fill a two-minute announcement—and no more. What ABC did was run a minute or so of ***BATMAN*** and then interrupt for an emergency bulletin in which newsreaders said at great length that they didn't know what was going on. Then, they'd return to the show for a minute or so of program, go to commercials, return to the show for about another minute, and throw on another emergency bulletin in which the newsreaders repeated what they'd already said. Infuriated viewers noted that (1) no new information was provided, (2) no commercials were interrupted, (3) interruptions were clumsily padded in a pretense to knowledge, and (4) to present this foul-up the network was messing up a serial installment the network had no intention of rebroadcasting right away. If ABC had handled the matter by announcing pre-emption of that episode and showing it at a later date, viewer reaction would have been far less vehement. Certainly, ours would have been. We had no objection to the bulletin, just to the inept fashion in which it was handled.

In any case, ***BATMAN*** was enormously popular, and licensing flourished. The theme as played by The Marketts hit #17 on ***BILLBOARD***'s national hit parade—and #35, as played by Neal Hefti and his orchestra. The show did very, very well—for a short time.

Don once got to talk with Burgess Meredith (who played The Penguin and loved it) about the pervasiveness of the program. Meredith was enthusiastic because his kids enjoyed watching the show; he had a "long nose, low crotch, and magic umbrella," and his kids watched regularly. There was a drink called "The Penguin" (five parts vermouth to one part gin—blech) and even a record by that title. ("A bunch of girls sing, 'He's The Penguin, The Penguin,'" said Meredith, "and I go 'hwak, hwak, hwak.' If there's an easier way to make a buck, I'd like to hear about it.")

Popularity of comics-oriented material was such that there was a Broadway show of ***SUPERMAN*** (which came and went faster than a speeding bullet) and a comedy show off-Broadway titled ***THE MAD SHOW*** (which was more durable and starred such people as Paul Sands, Richard Libertini, and Jo Anne Worley —and was ***enormous*** fun). And the ***MODESTY BLAISE*** movie had the distinction of being quite possibly the very worst adaptation of the very best adventure strip in some time.


DC
AUG
NO 183
12¢
BATMAN
HOT-LINE CALL, BATMAN! LET'S GET GOING!
NOT TONIGHT, KID! I'M STAYING IN THE BATCAVE TO WATCH MYSELF ON TELEVISION!
THE ADVENTURES OF BAT-MAN
HOLY EMERGENCY! WHAT'S THE REASON GOOFING OFF?
THE TELLTALE CLUE IS ON THIS COVER!
©1967 DC Comics

A typical *BATMAN* cover of the era of the *BATMAN* TV show. Fortunately, the gimmicky and frequently absurd cover ideas were not necessarily a true reflection of the stories.

Many critics were surprised that a show which averaged in Nielsen's top ten for the year (both installments, Part I at 24.7% of all TV-equipped homes and Part II at 27.0%) should flop miserably in its second season and fold after about two years. You probably won't find this tidbit suggested anywhere else, either, but we were there for this event, too, and we noticed one sad thing about ***BATMAN***: It didn't reward repeated viewing. Its

first time out was so successful that the network reran it to death in the Summer of 1966. If it had been shown once and then pulled until fall, hunger for the format might have led to continued good showings. But we'll never know, will we?

But this is a column on comics; did the TV show affect them?

Circulation departments would have said yes. DC had looked on ***BATMAN*** as a shaky title and had spoken of cancelling it. Then, Julius Schwartz became editor and the TV show came along; all of a sudden, circulation soared. The title became DC's best seller, and great effort was made to tie the comic into the TV show's popularity. Stories became campier, pop-art was emphasized, and DC even put "Go-Go Checks" on its covers to show how swinging the line was. (How swinging was DC? A headline on an ad for the DC teen-humor comics read, "Happy! Hilarious! Hep!" You figure it out.)

The general populace didn't mind. We were in a newsstand at one point shortly after the inception of the show and overheard a child of about ten exclaim, "I didn't know they had a ***comic book*** about Batman!"

Sigh...

BATMAN's sales were incredible, peaking at a stated average paid circulation of 898,470 and leading the industry at that point. Unfortunately, the figures were tightly tied to the program's popularity. The next year they would go to 805,200 and continue to fall after that. You can see how ***BATMAN*** fit into a list of some other comics' circulation for 1966:

408,219 ***JUSTICE LEAGUE***
346,250 ***WALT DISNEY'S COMICS & STORIES***
338,052 ***TARZAN***
297,516 ***UNCLE SCROOGE***
296,251 ***THOR***
279,406 ***BRAVE & BOLD***
261,069 ***STRANGE TALES***
256,145 ***TALES TO ASTONISH***
252,239 ***CAPTAIN AMERICA***
232,850 ***ATOM***
190,515 ***SUGAR & SPIKE***

(We won't go into an extensive essay on comics circulations as stated for second-class mailing privileges; suffice it to note that we have always found them an excellent guide to the health of industry titles, as long as only the average paid circulation figures are used.)

You can see that ***BATMAN***'s circulation was absolutely incredible for the industry at that point. However, fan enthusiasm for the comic was not so enthusiastic, as you can see from the fan award voting for 1966.

Alley Awards
FOR 1965

I. BEST COMIC MAGAZINE SECTION

1. Best Adventure Book with the Main Character in the Title: ***SPIDER-MAN*** (390)
2. Best Multi-Feature Title:***TALES OF SUSPENSE*** (570)
3. Best Super Hero Group Title: ***FANTASTIC FOUR*** (607)
4. Best Normal Group Adventure Title: ***MARS PATROL*** (371)
5. Best Fantasy/SF/Supernatural Title: ***STRANGE ADVENTURES*** (291)
6. Best Western Title: ***KID COLT*** (267)
7. Best War Title: ***SGT. FURY & HIS HOWLING COMMANDOS*** (366)
8. Humor Titles A. Teenage: ***ARCHIE*** (235)
   B. Costumed: ***INFERIOR FIVE*** (426)
   C. Juvenile: ***UNCLE SCROOGE*** (325)
9. Best All-Reprint Title: ***SPIRIT*** (544)
10. Best Combination New & Old Material Title: ***FANTASTIC FOUR ANNUAL*** (460)

II. BEST PROFESSIONAL WORK

1. Best Editor: Stan Lee (488)
2. Best Writer: Stan Lee (554)
3. Best Pencil Work: Al Williamson (469)
4. Best Inking Work: Wally Wood (463)
5. Best Cover: ***FLASH GORDON #1*** (353)
6. Best Coloring: ***FLASH GORDON*** (361)
7. Best Full-Length Story: ***"How Green Was My Goblin"*** (***SPIDER-MAN #39***) (369)
8. Best Feature Story: ***"Return to Mongo"*** (***FLASH GORDON #1***) (422)
9. Best Regular Short Feature: ***"Tales of Asgard"*** in ***THOR*** (431)
10. Hall of Fame: Never reported

IV. NEWSPAPER STRIP FICTION

1. Best Adventure Strip: ***THE PHANTOM*** (396)
2. Best Human Interest Strip: ***ON STAGE*** (372)
3. Best Humor Strip: ***PEANUTS*** (465)
4. Best Humor Panel: ***DENNIS THE MENACE*** (308)
5. Best Miscellaneous Strip: ***JULES FEIFFER*** (312)
6. Hall of Fame Award: Alex Raymond's ***FLASH GORDON*** (419)
7. Best All-Time Great Comic Strip: ***FLASH GORDON*** (331)

* note: Section III, the "popularity poll," was never reported.

V. FAN ACTIVITY SECTION

1. Best All Article Fanzine: TIE—***BATMANIA*** & ***TNT/SLAM BANG*** (221)
2. Best All Comic Fanzine: ***ODD*** (178)
3. Best All Fiction Fanzine: ***BATWING*** (176)
4. Best Article/Comic Zine: ***FANTASY ILLUSTRATED*** (332)
5. Best Fiction/Comic Zine: ***COMIC ART*** (115)
6. Best Fannish One-Shot: The ***"Spirit"*** Reprints (Ed Aprill) (150)
7. Best Article on Comic Book Material: ***"Quality Comics Group"*** (191)
8. Best Article on Newspaper Strips: ***"Pride of the Navy"*** (152)
9. Best Regular Fan Column: ***"What's News"*** (369)
10. Best Fan Fiction: ***"White Dragon Strikes"*** (224)
11. Best Fan Comic Strip: ***"Xal-Kor"*** (150)
12. Best Fan Artist: Grass Green (165)
13. Best Fan Artist: Richard Green (146)
14. Best Comic Strip Writer: Richard Green (146)
15. Best Fan Project: Aprill's Reprints (248)
16. Best Newsletter: ***DATELINE: COMICDOM*** (113)

Fandom Zone

...I'VE BEEN THINKING ABOUT WHAT YOU SAID... ABOUT MY FATHER...
YOU MUSTN'T WORRY ABOUT HIM, SU SAN. THE BIG CITIES ARE ALWAYS READY FOR THE UNUSUAL ON A HIGH LEVEL OF ART...
...AND THERE ARE LARGE CHINESE COMMUNITIES IN AMERICA... IN SAN FRANCISCO ALONE...
I KNOW—ACTUALLY, I WAS FEELING A BIT GUILTY, ALL THIS TROUBLE... AND IT'S THE MOST FUN I'VE EVER HAD IN MY LIFE!
MEANWHILE...
ANOTHER ONE? WHAT'S COME OVER MY IRREGULAR CORRESPONDENT?!
...THERE'S A LETTER FROM PETE, HONEY!
©1980 Chicago Tribune-New York News Syndicate

Leonard Starr's *ON STAGE*, 1965's "best human interest strip."

Possibly in an attempt to provide a ***broad*** picture of fans' opinions, Dave Kaler expanded the number of categories voted upon from twenty-nine to fifty-six when he took over the Alley Awards. A nominating panel was instructed to list ten nominees for such categories as "Best adventure hero not in costume or powered" and five nominees for such categories as "Best adventure hero title featuring one or more characters in strips bearing their name or other material in the book whether hero-orientated or not." Some of the results were printed in ***ON THE DRAWING BOARD #62-63*** (Aug-Nov 1967); the rest never appeared. Numbers given for each winner were apparently based on points ratings and not on the number of people voting.

You'll note that, whereas Batman was taking the rest of America by storm and DC was basking in its circulation figures, only ***STRANGE ADVENTURES*** and ***INFERIOR FIVE*** got DC any winners in the fan voting.

1966 was a full year, indeed, for comics fans. Jerry Bails gave up his post as Central Mailer of the first comics apa, CAPA-alpha. (We took the job.) You'll note that Ed Aprill's reprints got nods from the voting fans; he made the first major fan effort to collect daily strip sequences into a convenient magazine format. His were pioneering efforts of love, and his death in an auto accident a few years later hit comics fandom hard. He was responsible for collections of almost-impossible-to-get dailies of such strips strips as ***BUCK ROGERS, SPIRIT***, and ***JOHNNY COMET***.

1966 also saw two comics cons in New York City; we didn't get to attend the December one put on by Dave Kaler, but we did make it to John Benson's July 23-24 gathering (with Jack Kirby as guest of honor and with film shows by Chris Steinbrunner). In fact, there were other comics cons beginning to proliferate; 1966 brought cons in Dallas and St. Louis and even comics programming in such non-comics cons as the World SF Con (in Cleveland that year). Our coverage of these events included the news that "a new teen-age artist, Joe [sic] Steranko, will do ***AGENT OF S.H.I.E.L.D.***"

Benson's convention was well-programmed and offered such meaty fare as a debate on the Comics Code between Leonard Darvin and Don, a discussion of his own work by Jack Kirby, and a panel of pro editors who answered fan questions. Paul Krassner (editor of the underground newspaper of the day, ***THE REALIST***) reported on the convention in ***CAVALIER*** for November 1966 (***"The Funny Book Fanatics"***); it was one of the best of the early reports on comics fans, since Krassner was himself deeply interested in comics art.

NEXT MONTH: Endings and Beginnings

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by Don and Maggie Thompson

ENDINGS AND BEGINNINGS

[Note: Most of the readers of this report were born by 1967, but how many remember events in fandom then? If you're one of the people who do, how about letting us hear from you at 8786 Hendricks Road, Mentor, Ohio 44060? We'll be glad to interpolate your comments into this history; just because we've barrelled through 1967 by the time you read this is no reason to feel that it's too late to give your views on that golden year.]

If you've been following "***Fandom Origins***" and watched the PBS-TV show ***CONNECTIONS***, you may begin to see that fandom has its own series of Connections—which produced Comics Fandom As It Now Exists. You've noted that reprint zines were begun by Ed Aprill, the fan initiating the custom of publishing limited editions of complete daily-strip sequences. You've read about the increasing spread of comics cons.

In 1967 a publication was born which (though no one could have suspected it at the time) led to one of fandom's focal points (and possibly another): Out of ***NEWFANGLES*** came ***THE BUYER'S GUIDE FOR COMIC FANDOM*** and, maybe, out of that came Bob Overstreet's ***PRICE GUIDE***. But you'll find those connections later. For now, we're concerned with 1967.

"In 1967," says ***THE PEOPLE'S ALMANAC***, "9,419 Americans died in Vietnam, more than in all previous years combined." Increasingly, opposition to that war became itself militant. Increasingly, too, much of the youth of America turned to dropping out or lighting up or otherwise Doing Its Own Thing. Comics fans did theirs.

There was no widespread voter turn-out for the seventh annual comic art fan awards. Mark Hanerfeld tallied the votes, using the previous year's ballot (eliminating only the "Best All-Time Great Comic Strip" award), and asked voters to simply fill in the blanks. It was the first balloting done without a preliminary nominating ballot and may have intimidated voters with its number of categories and lack of guidance from nominations. In any case, only eighty-eight ballots were returned (but, since Hanerfeld was the first to specify how many ballots were involved in the final vote, it may not have been the lowest turn-out ever). (Results were printed in ***ON THE DRAWING BOARD #67***, June, 1968.)

This is a good time to remind readers that ours is only one angle from which comics fan

Fandom Zone

history can be viewed; we almost forgot to mention, for example, the coming and going of King Comics (a line which boasted that it **had** to succeed because there could be no returns—while we dourly pointed out that most comics fans couldn't find King Comics on the stands at all; clever marketing, that). We're almost bound to forget some of the ephemera of the comics world; the Batman explosion of comics circulations tempted entries into the field—entries that soon foundered. (It happened on television, too. **CAPTAIN NICE**—with the otherwise excellent William Daniels—came on NBC in January and went in August. **MR. TERRIFIC** did the same on CBS.)

C. C. Beck, long a fan favorite, provided Lightning Comics with his **FATMAN, THE HUMAN FLYING SAUCER** which ran (cover dates) from the April to the August-September issue, three issues. King Comics entered the field late in the year and managed to hang on for a couple of years before its lack of sales caught up with it. (If you don't have returns, you don't know what isn't selling. If you keep producing what isn't selling, you're going to end up with wholesale unwilling to order, and you end up with a sudden stock of unsaleable four-color product. That's assuming you have good distribution in the first place, which King didn't.)

The general run of comics had by this time begun to print circulation figures as a matter of course (second-class mail being cheaper for subscriptions than other classes). We compiled a relatively complete list of average paid circulations for comics in 1967:

805,700	**BATMAN**
649,300	**SUPERMAN**
547,100	**SUPERBOY**
527,200	**WORLD'S FINEST**
484,648	**ARCHIE** (was 491,691 in 1966)
450,700	**JIMMY OLSEN**
448,400	**LOIS LANE**
426,300	**DETECTIVE**
420,900	**ACTION**
412,800	**ADVENTURE**
411,235	**MAN FROM UNCLE**
385,800	**JUSTICE LEAGUE** (was 408,219)
384,450	**TARZAN** (was 338,052)
361,663	**AMAZING SPIDER-MAN** (was 340,155)
349,632	**BETTY AND VERONICA** (was 342,295)
342,400	**BRAVE & BOLD** (was 279,406)
329,536	**FANTASTIC FOUR** (was 329,379)
310,665	**DISNEY'S COMICS** (was 346,250)
308,736	**DENNIE THE MENACE**
298,219	**THOR** (was 296,251)
287,422	**JUGHEAD** (was 284,928)
285,544	**LAUGH** (was 282,731)
282,199	**ARCHIE'S JOKE BOOK** (was 286,865)
279,885	**FLINTSTONES**
278,901	**UNCLE SCROOGE** (was 297,516)
275,361	**DAREDEVIL**

THE NEXT DAY AT STARK'S SHOP...
THE JOKER JUST LEFT! HE RETURNED TWO COLLECTIONS OF STAMPS, AS HE PROMISED--BUT THEY'RE RUBBER STAMPS!
AND IN WESTON'S OFFICE, AT THE DUDE RANCH...
THAN HAT PROMISED TO LEAVE ME $10,000 FOR THE $5,000 HE STOLE BUT HE LEFT STAGE MONEY!
THEN..I'M NEXT!
©1967 DC Comics

Riding high on the coat-tails of the phenomonally-successful *BATMAN* TV show, the *BATMAN* comic book was the industry's high-seller for 1967.

275,099	**LIFE WITH ARCHIE** (was 300,954)
270,050	**KIDOKA**
269,139	**AVENGERS** (was 269,994)
269,132	**TALES TO ASTONISH** (was 256,145)
267,000	**FLASH**
266,815	**BUGS BUNNY**
266,034	**X-MEN** (was 255,070)
264,667	**LOST IN SPACE**
260,930	**SGT. FURY** (was 268,499)
257,342	**CAPTAIN AMERICA** (was 252,239)
256,448	**TOM AND JERRY**
255,470	**DONALD DUCK**
243,688	**VOYAGE TO THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA**
242,821	**PEP**
241,735	**PORKY PIG**
241,561	**STRANGE TALES** (was 261,069)
240,407	**ARCHIE'S PALS 'N' GALS**
239,700	**METAL MEN**
238,075	**MIGHTY SAMSON**
236,720	**TWILIGHT ZONE**
234,200	**AQUAMAN**
232,565	**TUROK**
229,100	**YOGI BEAR**
225,625	**BONANZA**
220,783	**WOODY WOODPECKER**
216,100	**MAGNUS**
208,135	**DR. SOLAR**
205,221	**RAWHIDE KID**
205,083	**MICKEY MOUSE**
202,100	**G. I. COMBAT**
201,700	**GREEN LANTERN**
196,500	**OUR ARMY AT WAR**
196,057	**ARCHIE'S MADHOUSE** (was 220,056)
192,113	**SAD SACK**
191,623	**ADVENTURES OF LITTLE ARCHIE**
189,500	**SHOWCASE**
187,400	**YOUNG LOVE**
187,400	**YOUNG ROMANCE**
184,100	**ATOM** (was 232,850)
182,200	**CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN**
180,800	**JERRY LEWIS**
179,592	**LITTLE DOT**
178,300	**GIRLS' LOVE STORIES**
177,303	**SPOOKY**
175,000	**WONDER WOMAN**
174,500	**HEART THROBS**
173,519	**MILLIE THE MODEL**
170,400	**GIRLS' ROMANCES**
165,700	**TOMAHAWK**
162,600	**TALES OF THE UNEXPECTED**
160,000	**STAR SPANGLED WAR**
158,500	**HOUSE OF MYSTERY**
157,900	**DOOM PATROL**
157,700	**BLACKHAWK**
152,200	**OUR FIGHTING FORCES**
150,200	**SUGAR & SPIKE** (was 190,515)
149,700	**SECRET HEARTS**
146,600	**STRANGE ADVENTURES**
140,005	**ARMY WAR HEROES**
135,266	**GHOSTLY TALES**
134,018	**ROMANTIC STORY**
125,710	**CAREER GIRL ROMANCES**
120,890	**TOP ELIMINATOR**
120,713	**SWEETHEARTS**
120,563	**HOT RODS AND RACING CARS**
120,328	**CHEYENNE KID**
120,310	**I LOVE YOU**
115,412	**LOVE DIARY**
114,700	**FOX AND CROW**
112,413	**JUST MARRIED**
111,410	**TEEN CONFESSIONS**
110,615	**TEXAS RANGERS**

This will give you a picture of what comics were in the comics picture that year (remember, though, that new titles didn't list circulations). (**ACTION, ADVENTURE, JIMMY OLSEN, LOIS LANE, SUPERBOY,** and **SUPERMAN**—all of Mort Weisinger's comics except for **WORLD'S FINEST**— lost more than 50,000 circulation from 1966.) The circulation of **STRANGE ADVENTURES** may give one reason that the fan-favorite "**Deadman**" did not survive as a regular feature; the stories were good and the art was excellent. Today, such a strip might make out very well in sales to

Fandom Zone

ALLEY AWARDS FOR 1967

I. Best Comic Magazine Section

1. Best Adventure Title with the Main Character in the Title: ***SPIDER-MAN*** (38 votes)
2. Best Adventure Hero Title with One or More Characters in Own Strip: ***STRANGE TALES*** (44)
3. Best Super Hero Group Title: ***FANTASTIC FOUR*** (71)
4. Best Non-Super-Powered Group Title: ***CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN*** (27)
5. Best Fantasy/SF/Supernatural Title: ***THE MANY GHOSTS OF DR. GRAVES*** (21)
6. Best Western Title: ***GHOST RIDER*** (31)
7. Best War Title: ***SGT. FURY & HIS HOWLING COMMANDOS*** (53)
8. Best Humor Titles:
   A. Teenage: ***ARCHIE*** (25)
   B. Costumed Hero: ***NOT BRAND ECCH*** (58)
   C. Juvenile: ***UNCLE SCROOGE*** (25)
9. Best All-Reprint Title: ***FANTASY MASTERPIECES*** (51)
10. Best Combination New & Old Material Title: ***MARVEL SUPER-HEROES*** (32)

II. Best Professional Work

1. Best Editor: Stan Lee (61)
2. Best Writer: Stan Lee (53)
3. Best Pencil Artist: Jack Kirby (30)
4. Best Inking Artist: Joe Sinnott (27)
5. Best coloring: ***MAGNUS, ROBOT FIGHTER*** (22)
6. Best Cover: ***STRANGE ADVENTURES #207*** (15)
7. Best Full-length Story: ***"Who's Been Lying in My Grave?" (STRANGE ADVENTURES #205)*** (17)
8. Best Feature Story: "Lost Continent of Mongo" (***FLASH GORDON #4***) (10)
9. Best Regular Short Feature: TIE
   "Tales of Asgard (THOR) (31)
   "Tales of the Inhumans" (THOR) (31)
10. Hall of Fame Award: ***THE SPIRIT*** by Will Eisner (17)

III. The Popularity Poll

1. Best Costumed or Powered Hero: Spider-Man (32)
2. Best Normal Adventure Hero: Nick Fury, Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D. (26)
3. Best Super-Powered Group: Fantastic Four (67)
4. Best Normal Adventure Group: Challengers of the Unknown (25)
5. Best Male Normal Supporting Character: J. Jonah Jameson (28)
6. Best Female Normal Supporting Character: Mary Jane Watson (17)
7. Best Villain: Doctor Doom (51)
8. Best New Strip: "***Deadman***" (52)
9. Best Revived Strip: ***BLUE BEETLE*** (18)
10. Strip Most Needing Improvement: ***BATMAN*** (12)
11. Strip Most Desired for Revival: ***"Adam Strange"*** (23)

IV. Newspaper Strip Section

1. Best Adventure Strip: ***PRINCE VALIANT*** (32)
2. Best Human Interest Strip: ***ON STAGE*** (27)
3. Best Humor Strip: ***PEANUTS*** (40)
4. Best Humor Panel: ***DENNIS THE MENACE*** (17)
5. Best Miscellaneous Strip: ***RIPLEY'S BELIEVE IT OR NOT*** (10)
6. Hall of Fame Award: ***FLASH GORDON*** by Alex Raymond (34)

V. Fanzine and Fan Activity Section

1. Best All-Article Fanzine: TIE:
   GOSH WOW (7)
   BATMANIA (7)
2. Best All-Strip Fanzine: ***STAR STUDDED COMICS*** (13)
3. Best All-Fiction Fanzine: ***STORIES OF SUSPENSE*** (7)
4. Best Article/Strip Zine: ***FANTASY ILLUSTRATED*** (30)
5. Best Text Fiction/Strip Zine: ***STAR-STUDDED COMICS*** (20)
6. Best Article/Text Fiction Zine: TIE:
   GOSH WOW (4)
   HUH! (4)
7. Best Fannish One-Shot: ***FANDOM ANNUAL*** (6)
8. Best Article on Comic Book Material: "Blue Bolt and Gang" (***GOSH WOW #1***) (10)
9. Best Article on Comic Strip Material: ***"Gully Foyle"*** (***STAR STUDDED #11***) (11)
10. Best Regular Fan Column: ***"WHAT'S NEWS"*** (Dave Kaler) (23)
11. Best Fan Text Fiction: ***"Nightwalker"*** (Larry Brody) (***GOSH WOW #1***) (10)
12. Best Fan Comic Strip: ***"Xel-Kor"*** (Richard Green) (17)
13. Best Fan Artist: George Metzger (18)
14. Best Fan Writer: Larry Herndon (13)
15. Best Fan Project: 1967 South-Western Con (12)
16. Best Newsletter: ***ON THE DRAWING BOARD*** (Bob Schoenfeld) (59)

A scene from *NOT BRAND ECCH #1.*

I DON'T NEED A SINGLE THING, THANKS!
I HAD MY 3,000 MILE CHECKUP ONLY YESTERDAY!
BUT IF YOU HAVE AN CLEAN REST ROOM--
PLEASE, GENTLE VISITOR--NO NOISE? I LEAD A QUIET, SHELTERED LIFE HERE...WITH MY ART, MY MUSE, AND MY REAL, SWEET THOUGHTS!
SAY! YOU MUST BE A VERY NICE PERSON!
ARE ALL EARTHMEN AS PURE-HEARTED AS YOU?
DEAR ME, NO! SOME OF THEM ARE ACTUALLY ROUGHNECKS!
WOULD YOU BELIEVE THAT THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO LOSE THEIR TEMPER--AND HAVE BEEN KNOWN TO SMOUT?!!
BUTTERFLIES I HAVE LOVED

©1981 Marvel Comics Group

Fandom Zone

ACG's two major super-heroes meet near the end of the run. Cover art by Schaffenberger.

comics specialty shops alone. Then, fan influence was minor at best, and fan sales alone couldn't keep a title alive.

If comics as items of fan appreciation weren't making it, neither were comics as pop art. The "DC Go-Go Checks" first appeared on comics cover-dated August 1967. (For those of you too young to remember this attempt to manufacture a pop culture symbol, we'll explain that the Go-Go checks were yellow and black checkerboard patterns that ran across the tops of all DC covers. Ugly and garish, they did at least identify DC comics at a glance for anyone who cared.)

A more major departure was ACG. The American Comics Group had continued for years to churn out a variety of titles, but 1967 saw the last of them. Responsible for such titles as ***HERBIE*** and such characters as Nemesis and Magicman, ACG sometimes elicits today articles filled with fond memories of the line as a whole. It did not produce much fan enthusiasm during its life, however.

There was a fannish birth in 1967, though, that seemed minor at the time but had long-range results. At the time, it seemed to be just another bit of fan activity designed to fill a need we felt: We published the first bi-monthly issue of ***NEWFANGLES*** and said, "We intend it to be a regularly published (monthly, if interest warrants) comics fandom newsletter. It will concentrate on fan news—marriages, births, deaths drastic alterations in the lives of fans, inductions, changes of address, convention news, major projects, and, of course, so forth. We will run brief review of fanzines and occasional pro news, if we can get it."

There had been a number of zines aiming at getting news of upcomings comics and such to an eager fan audience. There were none in comics fandom that aimed at giving circulation to *fan* news, and the big headline of the first issue (March) was "It's a Girl for the Ryans!" (Australian fans Jan and John Ryan had become parents of Fiona Leigh Ryan.) We ran changes of address and that sort of thing, and our circulation was not enormous.

NEWFANGLES news from the rest of 1967 was not of earth-shaking calibre. Births (including our first-born Valerie), deaths (including those of Robert Powell and Hugo Gernsback), and Richard Kyle's birthday were reported. We reported that Mike Barrier (despite two sprained wrists) passed his bar exam, that Australian postal workers were staging a slow-down, and that Fred Patten was unanimously elected Central Mailer of CAPA-alpha, the first comics amateur publishing association. Little did we know that our circulation would eventually grow from about fifty to five hundred eighty (which doesn't sound like much until you try to gather the news, mimeograph it, collate and staple it, address it, stamp it, and mail it each and every month.

One other fresh fan concept was introduced that year: Ed Aprill's continuing publication of daily strips. ***CARTOONIST SHOWCASE*** contained the first thirty-two ***JAMES BOND*** strips and also the first thirty-two ***MODESTY BLAISE*** strips, all printed clearly and in large size.

As comics and companies were floundering right and left, the first notable refugee from comics fandom took hold and cemented his position in the industry itself. Roy Thomas had begun his pro activity with a script for Charlton's ***SON OF VULCAN***, which he had submitted while still a fan. Heartened by his sale, he went to New York City and found a job in the industry; he worked as Mort Weisinger's assistant at DC for a couple of weeks. Moving speedily to Marvel at last, he worked initially on such sure-fire winners as ***MILLIE THE MODEL*** and ***SGT. FURY*** before graduating to ***DOCTOR STRANGE*** and other super-types (which is not—yet, at least—a registered trademark).

While pro companies underwent convulsions, a generation of people who had grown up on comics went into other methods of comics production. Roy Thomas opted for the traditional comics world; Robert Crumb opted for lower press runs with fewer restrictions on content. ***ZAP #1*** is described by M. Thomas Inge as the "first popular underground comic book," and it's certain that Crumb is virtually revered today as a founder of what are called "underground comix."

ZAP #1 was published in 1967, and its influences on fandom as a whole were only gradual; comics fans tended (and tend) to be too young to purchase much of what is produced in the field. Nevertheless, a vast number of fans of underground comix are—almost of necessity—comics fans. Gilbert Shelton had been producing ***WONDER WART-HOG*** for years by the time ***ZAP #1*** appeared, and the second and final issue of ***WONDER WART-HOG MAGAZINE*** was dated Spring 1967 (another folding for the year, you'll note), but ***WWH*** appeared in aboveground or college publications. It was the Wonderful World of Underground that would eventually give Shelton the fame he so richly deserved with ***THE FABULOUS FURRY FREAK BROTHERS***.

Next month: 1968 (It isn't easy coming up with titles, you know.)

FANDOM ORIGINS

by Don and Maggie Thompson

1968

THE YEAR AND THE COMICS

[Note: We want to hear from you about things we've omitted—or about your views of things we can only write about from our own perspective. Moreover, we're soon going to be running out of some information—results of fan voting for favorites in comics after 1970. If you've got lists of such results, how about letting us know? You can write directly to us: Don and Maggie Thompson, 8786 Hendricks Road, Mentor, Ohio 44060.]

Once again, we remind you of what was going on in the world at large—a world in which the microcosm of comics fandom was only a tiny element. In 1968, opposition to the Vietnam war grew, Lyndon Johnson announced he wouldn't run again, and Richard Nixon (saying he had a "secret plan" to end the war) was elected President. The year brought increasing social unrest and the assassinations of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy. Comics fans Skip Williamson (maced in Chicago at the Democratic National Convention) and Joe Pilati (his nose broken by policemen, while he was covering disturbances in NYC schools for the *VILLAGE VOICE*) were among those whose lives were touched by world events. Many comics fans were drafted and served in Vietnam.

Some fans seemed more concerned that 1968 was the year of *BROTHER POWER THE GEEK* and that comics prices were becoming increasingly unstable. (Gold Key raised its prices to 15¢ and went largely to reprints; Classics Illustrated's line went to a quarter. The only move comics fans applauded from Western was its *WALT DISNEY COMICS DIGEST*, which began in 1968 and reprinted some classic material.) Comics fans operated in a world that held an increasing number of conventions, but one of their focal points was in the midst of disappearing; the fan Academy died, was reborn, and then began to fail again.

In the midst of that, Mark Hanerfield managed to revamp the comics fan awards, get plugs for his balloting from the comics companies, and (in 1969) got 616 fans to cast ballots for their favorites of the year 1968. It was no mean accomplishment, and results ran in *THE COMIC READER #74*.

ALLEY AWARDS FOR 1968

I. Comic Magazine Section

1. Best Adventure Title: *FANTASTIC FOUR* (117 votes)
2. Best Fantasy/SF/Supernatural Title: *DOCTOR STRANGE* (133)
3. Best Western Title: *BAT LASH* (258)
4. Best War Title: *SGT. FURY AND HIS HOWLING COMMANDOS* (253)
5. Best Humor Title: *NOT BRAND ECCH* (348)
6. Best Romance Title: *MILLIE* (28)
7. Best Reprint Title: *MARVEL SUPER-HEROES* (282)

II. Professional Work

1. Best Editor: Stan Lee (348)
2. Best Writer: Stan Lee (255)
3. Best Pencil Artist: Jim Steranko (166)

THE HERROES ARE OFF THAT CRAZE IN THE PARTY TALE!
AND INVITED 4 OTHERS INTO HER COTTAGE AND HOPE CONNIVER OUTTA THEM
HUNH?, BEN SHE MIGHT BE YOU
HE IS SO HAPPY THAT YOU'LL BE ABLE TO LOOK AFTER LITTLE FRANKLIN FOR US! AND SUSANNE!
I HAD BEEN IN RETIREMENT, HER RICHARDS
BUT HAVING HEARD OF YOUR PLIGHT, I JUST COULD NOT REMAIN!
© 1968 Marvel Comics Ltd

FANTASTIC FOUR won for 1968, as well as for Hall of Fame

Fandom Zone

WHATEVER SHIELD IS LACKING BY FAR THAN ANY SINGLE AGENT—AND, EVEN WHEN EVERY AGENT DOESN'T HAVE TO FACE HIS FRIGHTFUL FOREIGN ALLEGIANCE—IT'S THE SERIOUS, HERCULEAN EFFORT OF THE WHOLE ORGANIZATION THAT'S BEEN SHUFFLING FOR THEIR ACTIVATION! THE CLASSIFIED, SHADOWY ALIENS ALL OUTPOSTS!
I CONFESSED MANY MANY PAGES BACK TO THE ARCHIVAL SAMPLE, SO I WON'T BOTHER TO MENTION THE OPERATION!
AND SUCH COULD HAVE BEEN THE CASE FOR THE ENTIRE, UNBELIEVABLE PEOPLE, WHEN THE SCREAMING SLOW UP!
EVERYTHING'S TOO GOOD! AN ALMOST SATANIC!
SUDDENLY, ANOTHER! I HAVE THE NEWSBRAIN ON OUR HOT LINE! THEY'RE STANDING BY FOR ORDERS FROM ANKEDIN
1981 Marvel Comics Group

A sample of Jim Steranko's hyper-techno *S.H.I.E.L.D.* work, which appeared in *STRANGE TALES*

4. Best Inking Artist: Joe Sinnott (168)
5. Best Cover: *NICK FURY, AGENT OF SHIELD #6* (86)
6. Best Full-Length Story: TIE: *"Track of the Hook"* (*BRAVE AND BOLD #79*) (31) *"Origin of the Silver Surfer"* (*SILVER SURFER #1*) (31)
7. Best Feature Story: *"Today Earth Died"* (*STRANGE TALES #168*) (55)
8. Best Short Story or Regular Short Feature: *"Tales of the Inhumans"* (*THOR*) (31)
9. Hall of Fame Award: *FANTASTIC FOUR* by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby (42+ votes) (Important: Mark listed *NICK FURY, AGENT OF SHIELD* by Jim Steranko as the winner with 45 votes. However, he added in his discussion that he had counted separately votes for *"FANTASTIC FOUR* by Jack Kirby" (42 votes), votes for *"FANTASTIC FOUR* by Stan Lee," and votes for *"FANTASTIC FOUR* by Jack Kirby and Stan Lee." Since, at the time the poll was held, *all FF* stories had been done by that duo, the voters obviously meant to pick the *FF* as their Hall of Fame winner.)

III. Popularity Poll

1. Best Adventure Hero Strip: *SPIDER-MAN* (174)
2. Best Adventure Group Strip: *FANTASTIC FOUR* (284)
3. Best Supporting Character: J. Jonah Jameson (147)
4. Best Villain: Doctor Doom (270)
5. Best Strip: Silver Surfer (166)
6. Strip Most Needing Improvement: *X-MEN* (55)
7. Strip Most Desired for Revival: *ADAM STRANGE* (83)

IV. Newspaper Strip Section

1. Best Adventure Strip: *PRINCE VALIANT* (65)
2. Best Human Interest Strip: *MARY PERKINS—ON STAGE* (79)
3. Best Humor Strip: *PEANUTS* (210)
4. Best Humor Panel: *DENNIS THE MENACE* (87)
5. Best Miscellaneous Strip: *FEIFFER* (23)
6. Hall of Fame Award: *PEANUTS* by Charles Schulz (64)

V. Fan Activity Section

1. Best Limited Reproduction Fanzine: *CONCUSSION* (37)
2. Best Unlimited Reproduction Fanzine: *GRAPHIC STORY MAGAZINE* (51)
3. Best Fan Artist: John Fantucchio (71)
4. Best Fan Writer: Larry Herndon (18)
5. Best Fan Project: Alley Awards (47)

(In case you wondered: Yes, *X-MEN* was truly abysmal in those days. Roy Thomas was shortly to zap life into it, ably aided by Neal Adams' artwork. Following that brief moment of glory, the young super-heroes would sink into the slough again—only to be improved once more years later. Isn't it marvelous what influence the fan awards had—provoking a comic's improvement *twice*!)

You'll notice that Marvel once again showed itself to be the fans' favorite. *BAT LASH* and *THE BRAVE AND THE BOLD* were exceptions. The former was a delightful and inventive rip-off of the movie *WATERHOLE #3*, which had come out in 1967. You won't find *BAT LASH* commanding high prices, even in Overstreet's latest listings, but it showed what could be done with derivative material by introducing a fresh format. Nick Cardy's lighthearted art complemented Sergio Aragones' and Denny O'Neil's layouts and scripts. It was, however, a short-lived delight. (Remember, those were the days in which fan interest didn't provide enough circulation to make a difference in saving titles.) It ran only seven issues. *THE BRAVE AND THE BOLD #79*'s "Track of the Hook" was a continuation of another fan favorite, Deadman—here teamed with Batman and hunting the Hook. Fan favorite Neal Adams did the art, to top if off and give it a spot among the winners of the year's fan voting.

NICK FURY, AGENT OF SHIELD began in 1968 under its own title; it had been running as a feature in *STRANGE TALES*. Jim Steranko did only four issues of the title on its own, but his imaginative work brought him many fan followers.

1968 was an interesting year for comics outside comic books, as well. *"Fritz the Cat"* by Robert Crumb was appearing in *CAVALIER* magazine. *BONER'S ARK* began running in newspapers across the nation. And *YELLOW SUBMARINE* popularized even further a comic-book-y style—this time in the form of Peter Max's designs. Harold Gray, creator of *LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE*, died of cancer May 9 at the age of 74. He had intended that Daddy Warbucks die with him, but the syndicate overruled that dying wish, and Robert Leffingwell continued the strip for a time.

As we indicated in our coverage of 1967, 1968 brought other losses in the field. King Comics died in 1968. DC's

SOON AS THE "MD N'EEKO N'ASH COMPLETE "NEW HEROIC ISSUE"
GREAT SCOTT! YOU'VE GOT SOOTH TEXAS LIKE A HOME!
ELEMENTARY, MY DEAR COLONEL SACE! SO HAD HOODLUM! WHERE'S HE NOW?
I WONDER WHERE OUR COMPANION HAS WERE HEADING!
OUR SUPER-HEROES ARE MISSING!
GET FROM HIM! GO TELL US ABOUT THE MONSTER CALLED "HOODLUM"! THEY'VE GOT TO HAVE HAD A NAME!
I'LL TAKE THE MONSTROUS HUMANOID RABBIT & INSIDIOUS "LORD HOW DO" - ECONOMY SIZED!
KEEP YOUR EYES PEELED FOR ANYTHING!
THERE ARE SUMMERS & LORDS IN MOST OF THE WORLD'S MYTHOLOGIES!
© 1981 Marvel Comics Group

The abysmality of 1968's *X-MEN* was arguable, but that title certainly had its share of uninspired issues.

BLACKHAWK, which had run 243 issues since its birth as *UNCLE SAM* for Quality Comics in Autumn 1941, succumbed despite an abortive attempt to turn its characters into superheroes with awful costumes—and despite the last-minute second-guessing that restored their former costumes just before the end. (An attempt to revive the characters in the late seventies was no more successful. The time has apparently passed in which a freelance military team is looked on with admiration by America's youth.)

The circulation of *BATMAN* was in a steady decline; artificially inflated by the television series, it dropped steadily as the show dropped in popularity. The show's last broadcast was March 14. In its spurt of popularity, it affected the course of the comic book—and the title was left with such changes as the new Batgirl (played on TV by Yvonne Craig). There had been an old Bat-Girl in the comic-book stories of the early sixties, but she hadn't been Commissioner Gordon's librarian daughter, Barbara. Fans who had objected to the comics line's picking up the "Bam! Pow! Sock!" effects of the TV show were grimly I-told-you-so-ing about the plunging circulation figures.

Not that fans were delighted with most other comics coming out. Mike Barrier, for example, made the following remarks (published in November's *NEWFANGLES*):

> "[*FANTASTIC FOUR #82* is] still far and away the best Marvel, and the best issue in some months, but...Here we have another madman who wants to conquer the world with a fantastically powerful weapon and has put the FF out of action, albeit temporarily. Somehow it sounds familiar. Gold Key publishes mummies, comics that are the preserved remains of titles that were killed by reprints and hack artists, writers and editors; DC publishes zombies, books that are dead and outdated but given the semblance of life through flashy layouts and a rapid turnover in personnel, as well as superficial changes in the characters. Marvel is still alive, but it's tired, and slumping into the repetition and formula stories that soon smothers other publishers. I find only three Marvel titles readable any more, and even they frequently stumble."

We were connected with one event that was to have a delayed effect: in the fall we mimeographed 450 copies of our fanzine *COMIC ART*. It was the seventh issue, and its bulk was devoted to the work of Carl Barks, creator of Uncle Scrooge and one of the true geniuses of the funny-animal world. Until that issue was published, only a handful of fans knew so much as the name of the man who was most widely known as "the good artist" of Western Printing's Disney ducks. Walt Disney had died two years earlier; it was not until after his death that his organization encouraged public discussions of the people who had labored anonymously for years, signing Walt's name to their work, their own creations.

Until *COMIC ART #7*, the bulk of comics fandom's attention was directed towards the super-hero. After that, collectors began to see other directions in which to go, and the super-hero fan did not hold sole sway in the hobby. Unfortunately, this meant that prices on the previously unfashionable funny-animal comics began to keep pace with prices on adventure comics. Somehow, that still seems a small price to pay for the ability to know the man behind the work that brought delight to a generation of children.•

KILLER MOTH--
NO WONDER YOU PICKED THAT NAME!
THEN THE NEW-- THE REAL-- BATGIRL MAKES HER FIRST APPEARANCE BEFORE THE WORLD-- AND KILLER MOTH AND HIS MOTH-MEN...
BATGIRL AGAIN-- HEYY-- A HORRIBLE THOUGHT! JUST HIT ME! DO YOU SUPPOSE SHE'S WORKING WITH BATMAN THE WAY ROBIN DOES?
© 1981 DC Comics Inc

The "new" Batgirl makes her debut.

Next Month:

"Conan Arrives, but *All In Color* Doesn't—Quite"

[Until coverage of this year — 1969 — our history of comics fandom has tended toward a stodgy outline of facts and figures of fandom. We've told you about annual comics awards, hoping that you'll gather from them something of the concerns and tastes of the ancient world of comics fandom. As we approach medieval comics fandom, though, we adopt a more informal, anecdotal view of the microcosm. This may mean that we'll take more than one installment to cover a year. It may mean that we'll ramble further afield in the byways of digression. Put on your mental hiking shoes. If you have any memories of your own to contribute, you can send them directly to us: Don and Maggie Thompson, 8786 Hendricks Road, Mentor, Ohio 44060 — or to the letter column of **Comics Feature**.]

The year that men first walked on the surface of the moon was not one of similarly memorable milestones in our four-colored world. But face it; nothing like the moonwalk had happened since history began. The fact

that fandom's little news notes seem a bit trivial these days is hardly a surprise. Trivia is still fun to explore.

Do you, for example, remember a DC comic book called **The Secret Six**? It had begun the previous year, folded in 1969 with its seventh issue, and became such a hot collector's item that a complete file in mint condition will cost you $7.50 by 1981 **Price Guide** prices. The comic book was a lot of fun, involving a premise that was a mystery. We don't mean that it was what is now called a "mystery" comic — a euphemistic description of a comic with stories about ghosts and werewolves and what used to be called "horror."

The mystery involved a group put together by a character known only by the code name "Mockingbird" — who blackmailed its members into belonging. **(He had, infact, poisoned the members and kept them alive with short-term antidote pills.)** In the course of the comic's existence, readers were supposed to look for clues to "Mockingbird's" identity. The stories were briskly told, the clues were tantalizing, and fans had a lot of fun with it. But its seventh issue was its last — and the seventh issue did not resolve the question of which character was "Mockingbird."

Fans collecting the title at this late date must wonder what was going on; fans at that time wondered the same thing. If you want to play the game, you might take into account our suggestions: that Carlo (in #2) and King (in #3) eliminated themselves by their thoughts and, moreover, that Lili wondered about something in #5, when Mockingbird had the information. Our nominee for Mockingbird was the character Doc (a chemist who could have analyzed and duplicated the pills but didn't, who had a bottle full of them when he was supposed to have only one at a time, and who suggested in the first place that Mockingbird must be a member of the group).

Have we made you curious enough to try to solve the mystery for yourself? Then we should probably mention that editor Dick Giordano said that **he** didn't know who the leader was, either. We reported in our newsletter **Newfangles**, "Seems the idea was to keep people guessing as long as possible and then unveil him/her. Meanwhile, no decision was made on **who** it would be — so no inadvertent clues would be given." Giordano said he leaned toward the character Crimson Dawn, because she was so unlikely. What do you think? Should DC reissue the series?

It seems to us that a serious, limited **mystery** series just might fascinate a readership more largely composed of fans than was the readership of more than a decade ago. Giordano works for DC to this day. Wouldn't it make sense to produce a limited-run series of, say, ten issues which would do the story **complete** — at a cost to the company of a small reprint fee and original work for three new issues?

While fictional crimes occupied the minds of fans, truly fannish crimes began. Until then, comics fans had been mostly a mutually trusting bunch. But 1969 brought the continuation of an unfortunately continuing trend. Australian fan John Ryan had a portion of his collection stolen; luckily, he knew who had done it (a fan who "dropped by" while John was out and remained in his collection room for a time) and settled matters. Things were not as satisfactory in Toronto, where "Captain George" Henderson wrote us that two major thefts of collections occurred — perpetrated by a thief who convinced fans he was a fellow collector and learned where collections were kept and how to get at them. (George had been a victim of theft the previous year, when someone threw a brick through his store's plate glass window to steal a copy of **Batman** #1.)

Alarming in a different way was the sad plight of comics/pulp collector Rob Gluckson, whose doctor told him in 1969 to get rid of his comics/SF magazine collection, because Rob had developed an allergy to pulp paper. Think about it. Rick Durell wrote, "I think **I** can tell you for sure that Rob has taken his doctor's advice (or is giving it a go). He told me of a big LA comic club meet and that he had gotten the meet together in order to sell out his comics, etc. I wonder how long he will be able to stay away from collecting (if he **really** makes the start, that is). Once it's in a person's blood, it's a hard thing to break away from."

To return to the discussion of True Crime in Comics, we should mention an episode of **Dragnet** (on NBC on Thursday nights in 1969) in which a kid stole valuable old comics and costumed-hero movie items. At one point, the kid explained to the cops that he was the Crimson Crusader and couldn't tell them his real name, since no one should know the real name of a hero, gangsters would give a fortune to learn it, and so on. What bothered us was that the **Dragnet** shows were supposedly true stories. (Remember the line about only the names being changed to protect the innocent?) Well, after all those years, we are **still** unable to locate any evidence that such a crime/criminal ever existed. Sigh . . . If you can't trust Joe Friday, whom can you trust?

Speaking of television, **Star Trek** fans who are also comics fans might like to take a look at "Spectre of the Gun" again. This episode (which first aired October 25, 1968) featured Sam Gilman as Doc Holliday (who loaned McCoy tranquilizing material). Only Jerry De Fuccio ever pointed out to us that Sam Gilman was the very same comic-book artist and writer who did such characters as Vapo-Man and Iron Skull for Centaur (1939-40). (Gilman had been in movies for years, though his only regular TV role was as Sam Grafton, the saloon keeper in **Shane** [September-December 1966].)

Comics fandom had an increasing number of small local clubs forming. For example, in Cleveland, Ohio, one was taking shape under the leadership of high-school student Tony Isabella — all its members agreeing that it should be called The Graphic Art Society of Cleveland. (Its acronym, GAS, was appropriate; the club met once a month so its members could do just that.)

However important local club meetings were to small fannish groups, comics conventions were becoming important to fandom as a whole. What had begun almost as an experiment the previous year was becoming locked into fannish tradition.

In 1968 Phil Seuling's New York City convention had beeen a major event. On the July 4th weekend, it had had a membership topping 700, and a number of pros in the field attended. Seuling and his committee decided to try to duplicate the event in 1969. Thanks to the sort of

foul-up that gives con chairmen ulcers, there was a loss of $140 on the luncheon; 140 people attended, and the tickets had been accidentally underpriced by $1 each. Despite that, the con turned a profit, and Phil even turned down offers from people who learned of the problem and offered to donate an extra dollar. (Until the books were finally settled, Phil was in personal hock for more than $3000. We know, $3000 today can get you a copy of **Walt Disney's Comics & Stories** #1. Today, $3000 may seem a bearable amount. But in them days, children, $3000 was a heck of an investment for someone to make on the hope that a bunch of fans would attend a con.)

Thanks to the success of Seuling's con that second year, a tradition of annual cons in New York City was established. Annually, fans and dealers get together on this weekend to devote themselves to fun, information, and haggling.

In our newsletter that year, we faced something that you'll find repeatedly today in magazines offering you news of upcoming comics. The problem was — and is — that if you want accurate information about what will surely happen, you'll have to wait for it to happen and find it reported as history. News announcements about upcoming events will always, inevitably, be in error part of the time. (We had more trouble than many fan reporters. We didn't live in New York City, though we had friends in the industry, and there was no official interest in supplying fans with news. The same companies which today hand out news to reporters and supply review copies of their output were uncooperative in 1969. When they weren't uncooperative, they at least did not volunteer information — and there were occasional attempts to find out who our "spies" were when we did find news items. Events could change radically within a week. For example, at the world SF con, Denny O'Neil told us that **Green Lantern** and **Justice League** were to be cancelled in the fall of 1969, barring a dramatic increase in sales. When the titles didn't fold, people who didn't understand the nature of changing decisions in comics accused us of making up the news.)

We did, though, give a Sign of Things to Come in **Newfangles** #38 (November 1969):

> "Dealers interested in contributing to a price guide on old comic books, contact Jerry Bails . . . He confirms our published comment about comic prices hitting a peak earlier this year and feels the market is stable enough now to warrant a price guide."

We saw Jerry at a con, and he was carrying around a cumbersome list with notations on a vast number of comics issues and titles. It was obviously a long-term labor and one complex enough to drive a compiler batty, since many titles were of so little interest that it was hard to know what had been published, much less what dealers were charging for the items.

The first issue came out the next year, copyright 1970 by Robert M. Overstreet, the "publishing editor," with Jerry as "associate editor." Obviously, we were all correct that the market had at last stabilized. **Four-Color Comic** #9 ("Donald Duck Finds Pirate Gold") was then listed at $40 ($60 in mint condition). Obviously, that stable price has changed little since then.

THEY APPEAR FRIENDLY, CAPTAIN. BUT THEY INSIST ON CALLING ME NAMOR! WHAT IS A NAMOR?
COMIC CON!
WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE MMMS?
FOOM!

FF was still on top, Bat Lash was riding tall. No one knew the name of Mockingbird or the name of baby Richards .. Comic prices went up to 15 cents. And Dr. Wertham struck again ...

1969 Continues

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Do you Remember?

by Don & Maggie Thompson

Comics drew increasing attention from the world at large. Christopher Ng wrote us about an item we reported in our newsletter for November 1969):

> Comics, posters, and mail order catalogues may soon be study materials for some degree candidates at Bowling Green State University [in Ohio]—focused around the university's Center for the Study of Popular Culture, opened in the school library recently after two years of planning. Its director says it's the only one of its kind in the country. The Center, according to the report, emphasizes phases of American life that aren't primarily intellectual or creative. Oh, so?

In fact, 1969 saw major steps taken in legitimization of comic art in the mind of the general public. Not only was the Bowling Green Center begun (with its backhand swipe at people who think comics could be primarily creative) but the SFACA was formed.

Bill Blackbeard set up the San Francisco Academy of Comic Art, a nonprofit taxfree institution, that year. Bill made his collection (2,000 volumes and 8,500 periodicals on comic art—plus 40,000 Sunday pages and 100,000 daily strips) available to researchers. At that point, the Academy was located on Golden Gate Avenue in San Francisco; since then it has grown enormously and moved. If you want to study comic strips (and some old comic books, as well, though the curator's fascination with super-hero comic books is limited, and the collection is not definitive in that regard), you should visit the San Francisco Academy of Comic Art, 2850 Ulloa Street, San Francisco, California 94116. (Note: Bill is extremely busy, as you can imagine. ReseaRCH VISITS SHOULD BE ARRANGED IN ADVANCE.(Moreover, if you need a tax break and have a good collection you're tired of, donations are legitimate tax deductions and will be appraised by Blackbeard for such a purpose. His cataloguing of your donations may make them more accessible than they would be in your own home, if you need to consult an item for reference.

Last installment, we mentioned the mystery of the identity of "Mockingbird" in DC's **The Secret Six**. 1969 had another comics puzzle for some fans: What would be the name of Reed and Sue Richards' son?

Seldom has the odd time scheme of comics been so completely out of whack with the world that reads comics as when the Fantastic Four became the Fantastic Five. Fans who had been waiting for months were finally

told that Reed and Sue's son had been born. It was then that fandom began to have doubts about the sort of parents the kid had. Issue followed issue without any indication that genius Reed and his proud wife, Sue, had ever had the slightest thought that a name would have to be attached to the infant.

Imagine. You're told you'll have a child. It doesn't take you five months to realize that it will need a name. Maybe you're just one of the world's procrastinators—and the baby arrives—and its name on the certificate is Baby Richards. Then, finally, you decide on a name.

Maybe you come up with a silly name. Or an unusual one. Lots of people have strange names and have even done well with them. Vermont Connecticut Royster was editor of the **Wall Street Journal**. One of Maggie's ancestors was named Preserved Fish. [Don't you wish **you** had an ancestor named Preserved Fish?] But you give the kid a name. Silly or sensible, rare or common, a name is going to be stuck on the child. Right?

But you're not thinking like Reed and Sue Richards.

The child was born in a comic dated November 1968. In the September 1969 issue of **Fantastic Four**, Reed and Sue suddenly realized they hadn't named him yet. It can happen to anyone, we suppose. For ten months, they'd apparently been singing lullabies to someone they'd been calling "Boy" or "Kid" or "Babyface" or whatever came to mind. But the realization didn't make the duo spring into action. Far from it. The team that could decide at a moment's notice to attack world-eating monsters or develop a doorway into a nightmarish neck of space was far more hesitant when it came to preparing a label for their son.

Even after they acknowledged the problem, Old Stretchy and his Transparent Teammate didn't delve into **What to Name the Baby**. They only indicated they'd have to think it over someday...

When it came, "Franklin" seemed hardly worth the delay.

In 1969, the world science fiction convention was held in St. Louis; though nominally devoted to SF, the con had attractions for comics fans, as well. At the costume ball, for example, the grand prize went to Bruce Pelz, but the prize for the most humorous went to Rick Norwood, who went as Charlie Brown. When a costumed fan fell off the stage and ripped the hotel's movie screen, the hotel promptly demanded $250 to repair it, and Harlan Ellison immediately began a fast hat-pass. Within ten minutes, more than $400 was raised [including a donation from some hotel employées, who were amazed at the loyalty and friendliness of fans]. Said Harlan, "Here's $250. Lay it on these mothers."

Jim Warren had been in St. Louis the first day of the con and then disappeared [flying to the West Coast on business]. When things were winding up on the last day, he suddenly breezed through the lobby, gathering fans in his wake. He assembled many of the comics buffs who remained [by this time, most had left to go home] and threw a delightful comics-related film party. The work of comics-fan-turned-filmmaker Bob Greenberg was shown—and a Felix the Cat cartoon. Then we were shown what was apparently the first pornographic animated cartoon made; it had, reportedly, been done by the same animators who had made the Felix cartoon. Jim was apparently under the impression that the film was artistic and sophisticatedly adult [an impression Greenberg kept trying to dispel]—but Warren realized his mistake as "Buried Treasure" began. The silent, black-and-white short was completely raunchy and often quite funny, in a primitive way. [It's definitely of interest to animation buffs.]

Speaking of "questionable" comic art brings critic Fredric Wertham to mind. There was some concern in fandom when it became apparent that he had been picking up fanzines and gathering information on fandom [eventually, though we didn't know it then, to be used in a book on fandom]. Rob Gluckson wrote that Wertham had asked him for a copy of the black-and-white **His Name Is Savage**. Rob supplied it, only to find a panel from it reproduced in the July 1969 issue of **The American Journal of Psychotherapy**, accompanying a Wertham article. The article's comments on one of Gil Kane's bloodier panels was that it was from "one of the currently mass-produced publications given me by a child and now in the hands of children far and wide." Rob remarked to us, "That 'given by a child' part, I'm sure, has a great deal of emotional value when read by a parent especially. In this case the child was **me**." Rob never did tell us how old he'd been at the time.

1969 marked a turning point in pricing policies: the return of the price increases which had seemed to be ended at the 12¢ level. By year's end, both Marvel and DC comics had 15¢ pricetags. Jerry Scalley sent us an article from **Marketing** in which comics as an advertising medium were discussed. A one-time, full-page ad in 4,500,000 copies of Gold Key's titles cost only $4,500; Revell, Inc., for instance, laid out about $45,000 yearly for comic-book ads. The May 1969 issue of **Marketing** was filled with happy remarks about how great it was that comics' prices were increasing. DC, for example, said, "retailers can anticipate earning more than $3.5 million annually on sales of DC comics...**almost $1 million more than was earned at the 12¢ cover price**."

Even so, we didn't think prices would hit 60¢ in a dozen or more years.

###

Next: "1970, the End of a Decade"

[Hey, people, you haven't been writing to us with additions, corrections and comments about our coverage of comics fandom's history! As we get increasingly anecdotal, we expect you to come up with your view of fandom of the era under discussion. What were you doing in fandom in 1969? It was only thirteen years ago, after all. Send comments, questions, arguments, additions and corrections to: Don and Maggie Thompson, 8786 Hendricks Road, Mentor, Ohio 44060.]

ALLEY AWARDS 1969

Last time around, we didn't report the results of the Alley[annual comics fan] Awards for 1969. **FF Newsroom #7** [done by Fantagraphics] printed the results in May 1971. Mark Hanerfeld tallied; there were at least 319 voters.

I. Best Comic Magazine Section
1. Best Adventure Title: **Fantastic Four**
2. Best Fantasy/SF/Supernatural Title: **Dr. Strange**
3. Best Western Title: **Bat Lash**[80% of the vote]
4. Best War Title: **Star Spangled War Stories**
5. Best Romance Title: **Young Love**
6. Best Humor Title: **Archie**

II. Best Professional Work
1. Best Editor: Dick Giordeno [160 votes]
2. Best Writer: Roy Thomas [149 votes]
3. Best Pencil Artist: Neal Adams [199 votes]
4. Best Inking Artist: Tom Palmer
5. Best Cover: **Captain America #113** [Jim Steranko]
6. Best Full-Length Story: "...And Who Shall Mourn for Him?) (**Silver Surfer #5**; Stan Lee, John and Sal Buscema]
7. Best Feature Story: "At the Stroke of Midnight" [**Tower of Shadows #1**; Jim Steranko]
8. Hall of Fame Award: Deadman by Neal Adams

III. Popularity Poll
1. Best Adventure Hero Strip: Spider-Man
2. Best Adventure Group Strip: Fantastic Four
3. Best Villain: Dr. Doom
4. Best Supporting Character: Rick Jones
5. Strip Most Needing Improvement: Superman

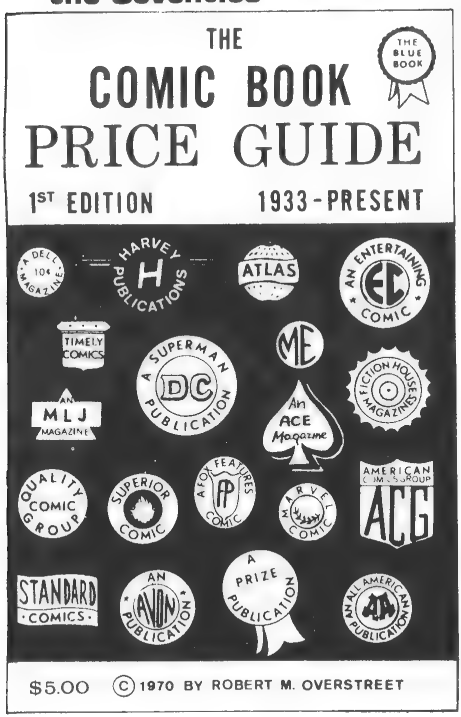
IV. Newspaper Strip Section
1. Best Adventure or Human Interest Strip: **Prince Valiant**
2. Best Humor Strip or Panel: **Peanuts**
3. Hall of Fame Award: **Tarzan** by Burne Hogarth

V. Fan Activity Section
1. Best Limited Reproduction Fanzine: **Newfangles**
2. Best Unlimited Reproduction Fanzine: **The Comic Reader**
3. Best Fan Artist: John Fantucchio [70 votes]
4. Best Fan Writer: Mark Hanerfeld
5. Best Fan Project: 1969 New York ComiCon

1970

A Guide for the Seventies

by Don & Maggie Thompson



1970 wasn't much of a year, historically. If you check the first **People's Almanac**, you'll find 1970 has one of its shortest listings, as far as major public occurrences go. In February, the Chicago Seven were convicted of conspiracy to cross state lines and start a riot, not to mention contempt citations arising from the trial; all charges were eventually dropped. The Cambodian "incursion" began in April, and in May four students were killed at Kent State and two at Jackson State in the course of student anti-war protests. It was a year of disturbances for what the year's census counted as 203,211,926 Americans. But the year wasn't marked by turning points—just continuations of trends.

Except in comics fandom.

In comics fandom, a force that made comics fandom what it is today was initiated.

As we told you in our last column, the belief that comics prices had stabilized resulted in work on a guide to the average prices at which used comics were selling. The first edition of Robert M. Overstreet's **The Comic Book Price Guide, 1933-Present,** with a cover price of $5, was published in 1970.

Actually, the work which went into the saddle-stapled book covered many years before that. Fans had worked for almost a decade in "organized" fandom (a non-existent concept, but you get the idea) to find out what comics had been published. Any fans who wanted to collect a title often had to go by consensus as to whether it even existed. The non-distribution of **Whiz** #1 and **Shock Illustrated** #3 were facts that only hard-core fans with contacts in the industry had in fandom's earliest days. The Dell Special Number series did not have a simple list that collectors could consult to determine what titles they were looking for, whether they were collecting that series as a whole or, say, **Tarzan**. You can imagine the problems in collecting that could—and did—arise.

And, suddenly, here it was: a complete index to **all** comics, a handbook that took no "insider's" knowledge to use. Anyone could collect whatever he was interested in and know exactly what it was he was collecting—and even what he might expect to pay to complete it.

PETER PARKER (See The Spectacular Spider-Man)

PETER PAT (See Single Series No. 8)

PETER PAUL'S 4 IN 1 JUMBO COMIC BOOK
No date (1953)
Capitol Stories

	Good	Fine	Mint
1 Contains 4 comics bound, Space Adventures, Space Western Crime & Justice Racket Squad in Action	12.00	24.00	36.00

PETER PENNY AND HIS MAGIC DOLLAR
1947 (16 pgs., paper cover, regular size)
American Bankers Association, N. Y. (Giveaway)

nn-(Scarce)-Used in *Seduction of the Innocent*, pgs. 310, 311

	6.00	12.00	18.00

Another version (7¾x11 ½)-redrawn, 16 pgs., paper cover

	6.00	12.00	18.00

PETER PIG
No. 5, May 1953 - No. 6, Aug. 1953
Standard Comics

5,6	1.50	3.00	4.50

PETER PORKCHOPS
Nov. Dec. 1949 - No. 61, Sept-Nov. 1959, No. 62 Oct-Dec. 1960
National Periodical Publications

1	10.00	20.00	30.00
2-10	5.00	10.00	15.00
11-30	2.50	5.00	7.50
31-62	1.50	3.00	4.50

PETER POTAMUS (TV)
January, 1965 (Hanna Barbera)
Gold Key

1	1.00	2.00	3.00

PETER RABBIT (See Large Feature Comic No. 1)

PETER RABBIT
1922 - 1923 (9¼x6⅝ ") (paper cover)
John H. Eggers Co. The House of Little Books Publishers

B1-84-(Rare)-(Set of 4 books which came in a cardboard box) Each book reprints ½ of a Sunday page per year and comes in B&W

PETER WHEAT (The Adventures of ...)
1948 - 1956? (16 pgs. in color) (paper covers)
Bakers Associates Giveaway

	Good	Fine	Mint
nn(No 1) Starts on last page and of 1st Adventure of	Kelly-a		
	35.00	70.00	105.00
nn(4 issues)-Kelly-a	25.00	50.00	75.00
6-10-All Kelly-a	20.00	40.00	60.00
11-20-All Kelly-a	15.00	30.00	45.00
21-30-All Kelly-a	12.00	24.00	36.00
31-40	9.00	18.00	27.00
41-66	8.00	16.00	24.00

NOTE - *All Hubbard art No. 347 on written by Del Connell*

PETER WHEAT FUN BOOK
1952 (32 pgs. paper cover B&W w/some color) (8¼x10⅝ ")
Bakers Associates

Contains cut-outs puzzles games, magic & pages to color

	12.00	24.00	36.00

PETER WHEAT NEWS
1948 - No. 30 1949 (4 pgs. in color)
Bakers Associates

Vol. 1-All have 2 pgs. Peter Wheat by Kelly	30.00	60.00	90.00
2-10	20.00	40.00	60.00
11-20	10.00	20.00	30.00
21-30	6.00	12.00	18.00

NOTE - *Early issues have no date & Kelly art*

PETEY (See Peter the Little Pest)

PETTICOAT JUNCTION (TV)
Oct Dec. 1964 - No. 5 Oct-Dec. 1965
Dell Publishing Co

1	1.00	2.00	3.00
2-5	.50	1.00	1.50

PETUNIA (See 4 Color No. 463)

PHANTASMO (See Black & White No. 18)

PHANTOM, THE
1939 - 1949
David McKay Publishing Co

That was a catch we'll return to in a moment.

If you've never done such a thing, you have no idea of the problems that can arise in any indexing—the massive quantity of sheer **time** it takes to produce a usable bulk of correct information. We saw the huge notebook Jerry Bails carried to each convention, filled with comic titles and prices and annotations—and Jerry was only **one** of the people who helped to provide the enormous amount of data that was distilled into a usable price guide. (He was, however, Associate Editor of the 1970 guide.) If you still think it sounds simple [and today's word processors would make such a project **easier** but by no means **simple**], look at a page of this year's **Price Guide** and imagine how you'd go about filling it with the information that's there for you to use any time you need it. You could attend a convention each weekend for a year and still not come anywhere near producing the handy, compact reference work Bob Overstreet comes up with annually.

There were, of course, errors in this first edition; there are probably errors in this year's edition, a dozen years later. The first edition, for example, said that there were two issues of **Whiz** #2 [one that was really #1 and one that was numbered #2 and really was]. The **Spirit** Sunday sections weren't even listed. Overstreet's introduction included the following passages:

> in the past there has been a lot of confusion as to pricing books by condition. It is my sincere hope that the Price Guide will help in this regard.
>
> Everyone connected with the publication of this book advocates the collecting of comic books for fun and pleasure, as well as nostalgia, art, and cultural values. Second to this is investment, which, if wisely placed in the best quality books [condition and contents considered], will yield dividends over the long term.
>
> Comic books with little or no value have been left out of this edition, but will be included in future volumes if and when their value increases. Some titles listed are incomplete, especially in regard to first and last issues, but this will be remedied in future editions as the information becomes available.

It was impossible for someone to know all about all fields, so we find a listing for **Katie Keene** [rather than **Katy Keene**]. We find the following titles [listed in the current edition as having been published before the first edition] omitted from that portion of the list: **Peter Gunn, Peter Pan Treasure Chest, Peter Paul's 4 in 1 Jumbo Comic Book, Peter Penny and His Magic Dollar, Peter Pig, Peter Potamus, Peter Wheat Fun Book, Peter Wheat News,** and **Pete the Panic**. And some titles that are listed don't have entries nearly as complete as the detailed coverage you'll find in the current edition, twelve years later.

All that just serves to indicate that the editor was constantly working to make his book reflect the current state of comics collecting. There's no doubt about it; if the job of compiling the first edition was a mammoth one [and it was], the job of keeping it up to date had to be at least as enormous, with an ever-increasing size. [The first edition had 218 pages of listings in reduced typewriter type. The 1982 edition has 363 pages of listings—in very compact type, indeed, with many more lines per page.] Even if no discoveries of additional old titles were to be made, new issues of current comics would keep the informational lists growing.

Robert M. Overstreet and his sides changed comics collecting.

It used to be that comics fans could find, even with magazine publicity of the mid-Sixties, that there were places where cheap prices for old comics could be found. Little second-hand shops, rummage sales, and flea markets existed in which people cleaning out their attics disposed of stacks of old comics for a song and were glad to do so. But all at once, anyone could have on hand a pricing reference work—and almost **no** one read it carefully enough to see that Overstreet cautioned them that this was only what **some** collectors would pay for **specific** conditions of **particular** titles.

What was intended as a **guide** became tantamount to price-fixing in some areas, through no fault of Overstreet's. Given the choice of three prices for a comic book, some thrift-shop owners would, of course, choose the highest—and maintain the issue [in ever-worsening condition] at that or higher prices for years, since their clientele wesn't comics oriented, anyway. Some comics dealers would hoard recent issues of popular titles and refuse to sell them at **any** price until the latest edition would advise the highest price that could be asked.

What was an attempt to **average** prices became, for many dealers, the **fixed** prices. For mint condition comics, the prices seemed to go up steadily each year.

And fans blamed Overstreet.

He became at the same time a household word [in fannish households, at any rate] and an object of some fans' scorn. "33% off Overstreet!" ads read—and the meaning is clear to the buyer at once.

He has even been chastised by fans of some titles, because, they say, he doesn't price these titles high **enough**—though the lower the price listed, the lower the price they'll have to pay to complete their collections. The rest of us wince every time another of our favorites is suddenly given special attention—with concomitant raises in price. Overstreet's prices are the topic of conversation at every con immediately following each year's publication of the annual.

We doubt—we very much doubt—that he saw in 1970 that all this would come to him. Would he have gone ahead with the project, if he'd known he was going to produce a work with which each reader would have **some** quibble? ["How **dare** you price **Bingo, the Monkey Doodle Boy** at only $8 in mint condition?!" "What do you **mean** my good condition copy of **Avengers Annual #7** dropped a quarter in value?!" "How can you cover-feature my favorite comic? Now I'll never be able to afford to complete my collection!"]

Over the years people have focused on the pricing and ignored the advantage of being able to buy an incredible compendium of up-to-date information. In doing so, fans ignore that the listing of prices is what has made it possible for Overstreet [and the ever-increasing list of people who help him with information] to provide an annual list of all the mainstream comics ever published.

Without the prices—providing countless additional sales—there could have been no annual edition. There would have been no impetus to add to and correct what was already published. There wouldn't have been sufficient annual motivation to update and correct what was there. It's all very well to say that **someone** should undertake this sort of project. It's quite another to do it—and do it well.

Overstreet has done it well.

In the early days, too, there was consternation over the pricing. How could he possibly handle the fact that some dealers grossly overpriced their wares, while some people sold collections at a loss. Overstreet solved the problem by automatically eliminating the highest and lowest price he could find on each item. How could he deal with comics in different conditions for each number, since every issue of every number didn't go on sale in three different conditions each year? Overstreet solved it by careful estimation, judging it by how similar items were selling. What issues were made more collectible by virtue of special features that attracted particular fans? Bob began including more and more information about each title.

In an effort to maintain as accurate a picture as possible of what is happening in the collecting field, he has even taken out ads to advise fans when a particular issue, for some reason, has taken a spectacular change between installments of his list.

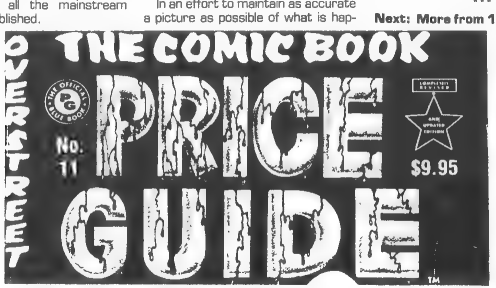
Bob Overstreet has, in short, taken on a massive assignment and has dealt with each problem as it arose. He has produced the standard work in a field filled with critics and has constantly worked to improve it, while other guides come and go [some with information taken directly from his copyrighted work, some with information taken from specific ads in an issue or two of an advertising tabloid].

In short, what began in 1970 as a modest little handbook done by and for fans turned into a book nationally distributed to the book trade by Crown. Its influence has been steady, and its attention to detail has been meticulous. Before its publication, want lists were filled with question marks. After its publication, people knew what they were collecting and the budget they should set aside for it.

It changed the world of comics collecting.

***

Next: More from 1970



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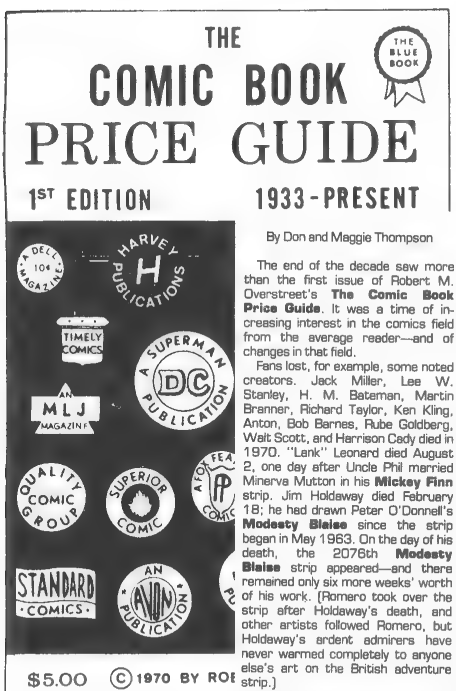


By Don and Maggie Thompson

The end of the decade saw more than the first issue of Robert M. Overstreet's **The Comic Book Price Guide**. It was a time of increasing interest in the comics field from the average reader—and of changes in that field.

Fans lost, for example, some noted creators. Jack Miller, Lee W. Stanley, H. M. Bateman, Martin Branner, Richard Taylor, Ken Kling, Anton, Bob Barnes, Rube Goldberg, Walt Scott, and Harrison Cady died in 1970. "Lank" Leonard died August 2, one day after Uncle Phil married Minerva Mutton in his **Mickey Finn** strip. Jim Holdaway died February 18; he had drawn Peter O'Donnell's **Modesty Blaise** since the strip began in May 1963. On the day of his death, the 2076th **Modesty Blaise** strip appeared—and there remained only six more weeks' worth of his work. (Romero took over the strip after Holdaway's death, and other artists followed Romero, but Holdaway's ardent admirers have never warmed completely to anyone else's art on the British adventure strip.)

Wendell Crowley's death in 1970 hit many comics fans especially hard. Hames Ware wrote, "When the surgeons who were to perform open-heart surgery on Wendell Crowley heard that he'd once been the editor of Captain Marvel comic books, they flocked around him, shaking his hand in awe and admiration. 'Captain Marvel?' one of them exclaimed. 'Gee whiz, you don't need us!' Wendell Crowley laughed as he described the above scene to me on his last trip through Arkansas in early February. His luggage had been lost on the flight in, all his medicine lost with it, he was facing open-heart surgery in two weeks for the second time—and yet this remarkable man was laughing. And that's the way he was. Full of the love of life, continually amazed that adults in all walks of life remembered Captain Marvel and, in so doing, remembered him. But no one who ever read Captain Marvel could forget him and no one who ever met Wendell Crowley could ever forget him.

On the other hand, at least one long-time comics creator was still active. Carl Barks, retired from his full-time job of writing and drawing duck comics for Western's Disney line, continued to do an occasional script for the Junior Woodchucks comic book. He wrote, for example, "[My] latest two stories are for the April [probably] Junior Woodchucks comic. One is a 13-pager about the JW's efforts to make a little money by gathering maple sap. The villains are Uncle Scrooge, Donald, the

Littlest Chickadees, and the Beagle Boys. The second story is a 12-pager of the Woodchucks' adventures cleaning up bottles and trash along the roadside. Magica de Spell is the menace. She has lost a bottle of Formula X somewhere along the road, and she bottles the nephews (literally) while she searches for her flasket. I am hoping to do two more Junior Woodchuck stories before the year ends. Heve to watch my Social Security allowable earnings. My little paintings continue to sell at the one gallery where I exhibit, but I'll fix that. I've got a big idea for a 24x36 painting of horses and kids that will waste two months of my time and never sell to anybody." [His licensed paintings of ducks were, obviously, still to come.]

Mort Weisinger retired from his post as a DC editor in order to write a novel [which did quite well]. News of that was followed almost at once by the news that Jack Kirby was leaving Marvel [where he had had enormous success and carved a niche as co-originator of such strips as **The Fantastic Four**] and going to DC. He was to be paid more per page than any previous penciller in comic-book history, and comics fans were stunned. The team of Lee-and-Kirby **was** Marvel Comics to many readers, who simply could not imagine some of their favorite strips without The King.

There were more endings and beginnings in 1970, some temporary, some permanent.

Dick Giordano announced that he was quitting editing for a time to concentrate on drawing. [This was **not** to be permanent, as he made clear.]

With 1970 came the announcement that Kryptonite would lose its effect on Superman, who was gradually to lose many of his powers. [The SF fanzine **Focal Point** quoted writer Denny O'Neil: "How would **you** like to plot adventure stories about a hero so powerful he makes God look like Wally Cox? **Conflict**, Cal. You can't have adventure stories without it, and it is a difficult commodity to manufacture when your title character can destroy a galaxy by merely **listening** hard.") Eventually, it was agreed that [by a plot device] Supes would be weakened to a third of the power he had gained by the late Sixties. Though she didn't get involved with that plot device, Supergirl nevertheless had powers only on a par with her relative; for the next little while, neither of them pushed planets around very much. [In more recent times, many writers on the assorted Super-stories seem to have forgotten all this, though some are still more careful than others to avoid using what had been solar-system-shattering abilities.]

© 1982 Marvel Comics

Jim Steranko formed Supergraphics and came out with the first volume of his **History of the Comics** with the statement that it would run to four volumes. A dozen years later, only two in the series have seen print, but we're looking forward to the rest, whenever they emerge.

Steve Canyon got married.

Stan Lee, Neal Adams, and several other comics creators banded together to form The Academy of Comic Book Arts; this was the first such official group of comic-book creators and marked that start of more-or-less formal gatherings of comics pros [as opposed to cartoonists, comic-strip artists, and animators, who had formed such groups years before].

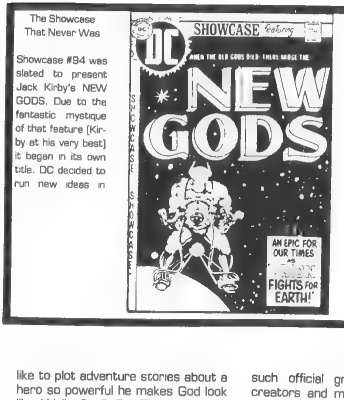
Sol Brodsky formed Skywald, a short-lived publishing house which brought out such mediocre titles as **Psycho**, **Nightmare**, and **Sundance Kid**. Skywald's black-and-white magazines lasted longer than its color comics, but the line as a whole quickly died. There was just not much there to interest the hardcore comics buff, much less the casual comics buyer.

Probably the year's biggest comic-book success was a bold experiment by Roy Thomas. For some time, he had been campaigning for Marvel to begin a comic based on Robert E. Howard's Conan pulp stories from the early Thirties. There had been some continuing interest in the series [though little of a commercially exciting nature]. The Hyborian Legion [a group of fans who studied the canon with humor and intelligence] had begun fifteen years earlier and was still in existence. But there were not enough in Howard's core of admirers to keep a comic book going, and Roy knew he would have to appeal to a wider audience. He was granted permission to do a comic only after much reluctance on the company's part.

The Showcase That Never Was

Showcase #94 was slated to present Jack Kirby's NEW GODS. Due to the fantastic mystique of that feature [Kirby at his very best] it began in its own title. DC decided to run new ideas in their own books; thus Showcase died, and there was no #94.

Ironically, the comic which later took the place of Showcase, First Issue Special, featured the return of the NEW GODS in **its** last issue, also.



The first issue of **Conan** in comic-book form came out in the summer of 1970 and, by issue #4, the title was monthly. Art on the first issue was unpretentious and even a bit crude; Barry Smith's work rapidly improved to an impressive level, and there are those who still feel that these were the best adaptations of Howard's character ever done. The strip has been such a success that recent news stories about the Conan film identify Conan as a comic-book character.

The top title for each publisher had the following circulation:

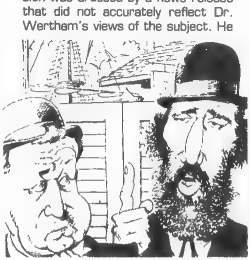
1,884,502 **Mad** [Mad]
515,356 **Archie** [Archie]
511,984 **Superman** [DC]
373,303 **Amazing Spider-Man** [Marvel]
318,577 **Dennis the Menace** [Fawcett]
283,968 **Tarzan** [Gold Key]
205,015 **Popeye** [King]

Showcase died with #93 ("Manhunter 2070"), and **Challengers of the Unknown** went with #77, but **Amazing Adventures** ["Inhumans"] and **Astonishing Tales** ["Ka-Zar"] began. Possibly the strangest of the comings and goings of comic-book titles occurred with Gilberton's **Classics Illustrated**. Despite the account given in Overstreet's current **Guide**, #169 was **not** the title's last issue. Issue #169 ("Negro Americans") had come out in the summer of 1969. It was not until our May 1970 issue of **Newfangles** that we announced the publication of #168 ["In Freedom's Cause" by G. A. Henty], with art by Reed Crandall and George Evans. [We were **Classics** followers and bought the titles as they appeared.] At that point, the magazine was listed as a quarterly, but it never saw another issue. The magazine ran through #169, but #168 was the last issue.

Another publication of interest to fans was announced as upcoming. Fans felt a certain amount of consternation at the news that The Twentieth Century Fund was financing a study of fanzines—by **Seduction of the Innocent** author Frederic Wertham. He had been asking for fanzines from fans and now, everyone was sure, he was going to "expose" fandom.

The Twentieth Century Fund Newsletter announced in its December 1969 issue: "Fanzines—amateur publications produced by adolescents that discuss comic strips, science fiction, sex, and the adult world—will be the subject for a Fund study under the direction of Frederic Wertham, a well-known psychiatrist. Dr. Wertham, who has been collecting these publications and studying this almost unknown sector of the underground press for many years hopes to produce a monograph that promises to be the first report on fanzines for either the academic or general reader and is part of the Fund's continuing interest in both professional and amateur media. The study will examine the content of fanzines, describe their production, and attempt to draw conclusions from what they reveal about an important segement of the country's adolescent population. The result of the study, Dr. Wertham believes, can have a bearing on adolescent psychology, education, student unrest, sexual mores of youth, freedom of expression, obscenity, violence, political attitudes of youth, juvenile drug addiction, and the economics of amateur publishing."

One of our correspondents wrote the TTCF to criticize the selection of Wertham to conduct the study. The Fund's director responded, "We appreciate your concern. We must confess, however, that your apprehension was aroused by a news release that did not accurately reflect Dr. Wertham's views of the subject. He



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actually holds considerable affection and admiration for the fanzine world and the values it expresses. We think that when the study appears you will find no grounds for complaint about lack of objectivity or insight. And in fairness to Dr. Wertham, we must point out that this research on violence is only a small aspect of a distinguished career in psychiatry."

[The book, when it came out, was an interesting one in which a long-lived science-fiction fandom was indiscriminately combined with the mre recently emerged comics fandom to form a single sociological unit, which was then discussed with the confusion you might expect from such a viewpoint.]

The book which drew most of **our** attention in 1970, though, was Arlington House's **All in Color for a Dime**, the book Dick Lupoff and Don Thompson edited. Evolved from a series which had run in Dick's science-fiction fanzine **Xero** years before, the book had taken considerable time to put together and many, many months more to clear the rights for illustrations. Today's fans can find it most cheaply in the form of an Ace paperback, available from some dealers in comics memorabilia. The hardcover, in any case, was printed at the end of 1970, and it even had a half-page ad in the New York **Times Book Review** section. It was an elating way to end the year.

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Next time: "Let There Be Light"

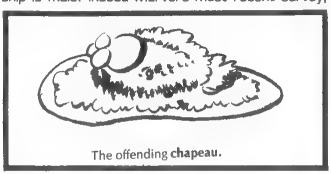
WHY WOMEN DON'T READ COMICS

by Carol B. Kalish

So there I was, just sitting there sipping my tea while reading the latest batch of new comics. Suddenly my eye was caught by the cover of **DAREDEVIL #166**. "Oh, goodie," I chortled to myself, "Foggy's wedding. I don't like Foggy, but I love weddings." Eagerly I opened the book only to shrink back in horror at what lay before my eyes. I threw the comic in disgust over my shoulder. [The comic, for those who are interested, struck my Baron Karza, who was perched precariously on the refrigerator. Both comic and super-villain/toy plummeted to their doom and were seen nevermore by man—although I did notice the kittens playing with pieces of Karza a little later.] What caused this show of repugnance, you inquire while looking anxiously around for the men in the white jackets? Well you might ask! It was nothing less than the outrageous concoction that purported to pass as **Heather's hat** [see page 1 of **DAREDEVIL #166** for a look at the offensive item] that provoked me to such unusual shows of violence and vehemence.

You have by now probably glanced anxiously at my title to reassure yourself that my purported theme is indeed **"Why Women Don't Read Comics"** and not, as you might justifiably suspect, **"The Life And Bizarre Times of Carol Kalish."** Admittedly my descent into True Confessions might seem a bit peculiar, but it does ultimately relate to my subject. For while I still persist in my belief that the hat in question was as unsuitable for the occasion as it was unbecoming to the wearer, my main objection to the item of apparel lies more in the realm of theory than it does in the specifics of the case. For Heather's Hat is, for me at least, a symbol of all the myriad (but often related) reasons why women don't read comics.

Now before all my fellow female comic enthusiasts rise up in anger and quite rightly point out that they read comics, allow me to point out that the comics medium is held by both the fans and the industry's marketing experts to be more popular among males than females. All of Marvel's, DC's, and **HEAVY METAL**'s reader surveys and advertising demographics indicate that the majority of their readership is male. Indeed Marvel's most recent survey, conducted only a few years ago, established that almost ⅔ of its audience was made up by men, while DC's survey, conducted in the late 1970's, put its male readership at only slightly less than that. **EPIC**'s reader survey gauged its readership as 94.3% male. **HEAVY METAL**'s reader profiles have not been as extensively tested and surveyed as have the other companies. However, its advertising promotion does describe its audience as primarily male. Earlier ad sheets indicated that at one time over 75% of its audience was male. Given these survey results and established reader profiles, and their revelation that the comics audience is primarily male in spite of the fact that the female population in the U.S. is 2% greater than that of men, it seems that something about contemporary comics must act as a barrier to potential female readership. Either some key, appealing element is lacking in today's comics as far as women are concerned, or something is present which decreases female appreciation of the medium.



The offending **chapeau**.

Women, generally speaking, have certain perception differences from men which result in each sex seeking out and enjoying fundamentally different types of novels, plays, movies, and, yes, comics. Although the cause of this perception difference has not yet been established [research at Harvard University indicates that the differences might arise

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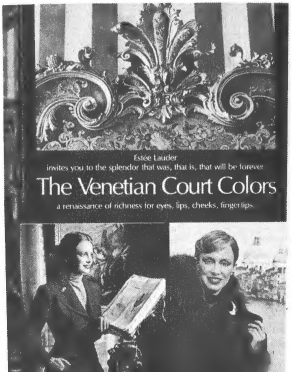
Young Deb
Yuck-a!
SLAM-BANG
ACTION

from the socialization process of young children, while Berkeley and Stanford experimenters have argued that role models and reinforced career aspirations among young children might be the twin causes], tests, surveys, and experiments which contrast the perceptions of women against those of men have uncovered certain key and consistent differences in how each sex reacts to what it sees.

These differences range from an appreciation of action and a tolerance for violence [men seem to react favorably to action even if it's tainted with violence, while women tend to be either indifferent or negative towards action] to greater comprehension of subtle characterization elements like body language, facial expressions, tics, and attire [women, according to a Duke University study, excel at interpreting body language and, more importantly to the subject of this article, seem to enjoy the process of interpreting characters through subtle physical expressions and posture. The men involved in the study generally reported that they felt uncomfortable or confused by such signals]. These perception/attitudinal differences might be behind the general disdain that men have for the favorite women's hobby of watching soap operas, and the reciprocally bemused attitudes of many women towards their husband's addiction to **MONDAY NIGHT FOOTBALL** and hockey.

Indeed the advertising industry has been aware of these sexual differences for over two decades and has, for an equal length of time, developed advertising campaigns that exploit these differences to better sell specific products. Any random comparison between advertising directed towards men versus that directed towards women reveals how advertising men, at least, translate these sociological observations into marketing strategy. Ads aimed at men emphasize action and movement. Car ads, for example, either picture the car in movement or show some individual or groups of people moving around stationary vehicles. A hint of danger or even violence generally increases the sales effect. The photography is very clean and sharp. Clarity of vision is emphasized. Finally the object to be hyped is almost always placed in the foreground. Ads aimed at women, on the other hand, take a very different tack. The object to be sold is often buried in the picture or used as an accessory. Camera work emphasizes mood and emotion: it's rare to locate a woman's ad that is a clear picture of anything at all. Indeed, successful women's advertising seems to ignore the object to be sold entirely in favor of emphasizing evocative expressions or emotions. Posture, expressions, attire —the projection of personality is often the goal of female-oriented advertising.


Estee Lauder
invites you to the splendor that was, that is, that will be forever
The Venetian Court Colors
a renaissance of richness for eyes, lips, cheeks, fingertips.

A typical **COSMO** ad. Any guesses on what the actual **product** is?

When you contrast these two advertising strategies with modern comics, it becomes dazzlingly obvious why women don't read them. It also becomes obvious what can be done to reverse this trend and lure more women into the comic book audience.

HMMM -- EYES UNUSUALLY BRIGHT -- CHEEKS HIGHLY FLUSHED -- AND PULSE PROBABLY BEATING AT AN ALARMING RATE... I'M AFRAID THIS TALENT FEVER IS GETTING OUT OF HAND, YOUNG LADY!
I'M IN A WONDERFUL STATE OF DELIRIUM, DOCTOR KING! SEE VISIONS ALL DAY LONG.. AND ONE OF THESE DAYS THEY'LL COME TRUE! JUST YOU WAIT!

"Historically there have always been comics that have managed... to address and capture the female market." At its peak, this comic, **YOUNG LOVE**, sold 2 million copies each issue.

Comics today radiate action. In any title or individual issue you might choose to mention, the whole thrust of the storyline is designed to propel the super-hero into combat with some foe. For all the attention and praise the frills [the characterization shticks, the moral ambiguities, and the emotional upheavals] receive from the fan press, the real core of the book remains the **de rigeur** fight scene. The characterization bits are extras, just filler stuffed in around the fight.

According to the marketing theory we've examined, this slam-bam-action-**cum**-violence emphasis appeals greatly to male readers but elicits at **best** neutral, and at worst negative, rections from any potential female readers. Female readers are looking specifically for those extra bits, the characterization elements, that are added as an afterthought to the comic-book story. In addition to searching for these characterization elements, female readers are also involved in analyzing and testing for versimilitude the elements that they **did** uncover. Dialogue would be contrasted against actual experienced conversations; attire would be judged according to the style, personality, and appearance of the wearer; and motivations would be evaluated in light of the believability of the expressed motives and their development process. Unfortunately, after-thought characterization elements, or even elements that are integral to the plot but are sprung full-blown upon the reader without the benefit of previous development, rarely lend themselves to this sort of analysis. They therefore again fail to satisfy the potential female reader's desire for something that is of interest specifically to her.

This predilection of comics towards satisfying male entertainment desires while refusing to address the needs of female readers is of fairly recent development. Historically there have always been comics that have managed either to address and capture the female market [the Love comics genre and the **ARCHIE COMICS** line] or to have balanced both male and female entertainment expectations in such a way as to provide satisfactory stories for both sexes [Funny Animal comics, many Gold Key titles, and Harvey Comics are all examples of comics titles, genres, or groups that appeal to both men and women]. Indeed at one time both Marvel and DC had several titles that catered principally to the female audience [Marvel published a number of "teen humor" comics like **MILLIE THE MODEL** and **PATSY AND HEDY** while DC was one of the last major publishers of Love comics].

Generally speaking those titles that managed to secure female readership did so through three devices: the heavy use of expressions and body language to suggest character traits, narrative and conversational highlighting of motivation and personality drives, and an exacting effort to be visually realistic. Again, contrast this comic book strategy to the advertising strategy discussed earlier. Although it's true that all three elements rarely appeared to-

"Female readers are looking specifically for those extra bits, the characterization element..."

THE X-MEN HAVE BEEN AMBUSHED BY JUGGERNAUT!
YOU MUST LEAVE HERE AT ONCE, PROFESSOR! THIS IS YOUR ASSISTANCE YOU CAN!
NO, PROFESSOR! NOT THIS TIME!
I'M STAYING HERE AT THE MANSION! UNTIL YOU'RE OUT OF DANGER.
YOU'RE -- WHAT?!
YOU'RE PUTTING THE LIFE OF ONE WOMAN AHEAD OF THOSE OF YOUR FELLOW X-MEN?!
I AM, BECAUSE THAT WOMAN IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IN MY LIFE!
BEFORE THERE IS ANYTHING I CAN DO TO HELP THE X-MEN; AND NOW, I CAN GET TO THEM IN TIME TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE.
AND YOUR ASSOCIATE HAS SAID THAT, SOONER OR LATER, THE X-MEN TEAM IS GOING TO HAVE TO JOIN TO FIGHT ON ITS OWN.

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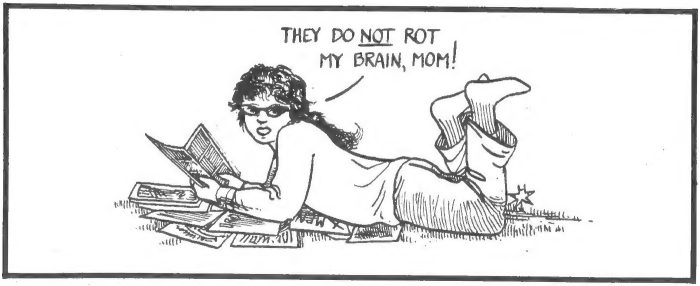

gether, it is equally true that it was rare for a comic to be popular with women if it didn't have at least one of these elements prominently displayed in the storytelling. Comics like the Simon and Kirby **YOUNG LOVE** and **YOUNG ROMANCE**, two of the all-time top sellers among women, often exhibited all three.

Today's super-hero comics rarely exhibit one of these traits. The few books that do attempt to incorporate one of these elements into their storytelling, **IRON MAN, POWER MAN/IRON FIST, THE NEW X-MEN**, and all of the many **Superman** titles, generally are the very books that seem to have attracted and held a large female audience. **IRON MAN**'s emphasis on Bethany Cabe's and Tony Stark's wardrobes and the many attempts by the creative team to realistically evoke the glamorous aura that supposedly surrounds the very rich would be very attractive to, say, the young woman who reads **COSMOPOLITAN** magazine. **POWER MAN/IRON FIST** and **THE NEW X-MEN** offer female readers a seemingly overflowing bounty of complex characters that cry out for analysis and dissection as far as their motivations and innermost personalities are concerned. The **Superman** books, on the other hand, emphasize the facial expressions and body language that female readers are often attracted to.

However, even these books, successful as they are at capturing the female market, are not completely able to throw off the tendency to favor male expectations over female interest. After all, each issue must contain the mandatory fight scene and substantial portions of the book must be devoted to building up to this physical confrontation. The fact that by slanting the content so heavily into one sex's interest, the book is reducing its ability to exploit an equally large audience does not seem to have occurred to anyone at either Marvel or DC. The mind positively boggles at the sales advantage that would benefit the company that finally realized that, be reducing the space devoted to action scenes slightly and then by devoting that space to catering to female interests, it could tap a potential sales market that was as large, if not larger, than the audience it currently was selling to.

So to answer my original question of **"Why Women Don't Read Comics,"** I have to conclude that it's because the companies don't want them to. Certainly no effort is made to capture the female market, even though a solid marketing strategy for doing just that has been in existence for over two decades. If the companies refuse to cater to the entertainment demands of women, then it should come as no surprise to anyone that women will continue to refuse to support the medium. ●